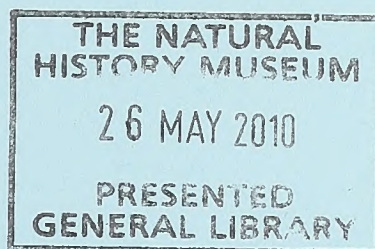


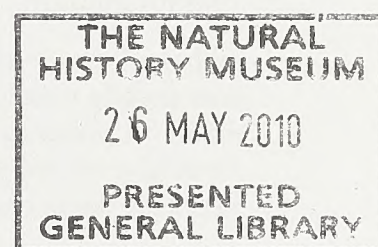
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JOURNAL
2009

March 2010

EDINBURGH NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY



COUNCIL AS AT JANUARY 2010

HON PRESIDENT	Elizabeth Farquharson	
PRESIDENT	Neville Crowther	retires 2010
VICE PRESIDENTS	Natalie Taylor Jackie Muscott	retires 2011 retires 2010
HONORARY SECRETARY		Vacant
HONORARY TREASURER	Rebecca Yahr	0131 248 2491
COUNCIL MEMBERS	Chris Ellis Phil McInnes Eunice Smith Peter Tothill	retires 2010 retires 2011 retires 2011 retires 2012
JOURNAL COMMITTEE	The President (ex officio) Elizabeth Farquharson, Jackie Muscott Sandra Stewart, Lyn Blades Tom Delaney (Editor)	
RECORDS	Ena Gillespie	
LIBRARIAN	John Watson	
EXCURSION COMMITTEE	Lyn Blades (Chair) Neville Crowther, Grace Jamieson Molly Woolgar, David Adamson	

The Edinburgh Natural History Society was founded in 1869 and incorporates the Edinburgh Field Naturalists and Microscopical Society, instituted in 1881. The Society was instituted for the study of natural history in all its branches and for the encouragement of public interest and concern in these matters.

An indoor talk is held on one Wednesday every month from September to April, in the Guide Hall, 33 Melville Street at 7.30pm. All are welcome. Outdoor excursions are held throughout the year. A copy of the programme for Summer 2009, and details of membership of the Society can be obtained from our website at edinburghnaturalhistorysociety.org.uk

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THE PRESIDENT'S THOUGHTS

Neville Crowther

It has proved to be a difficult year for the Officers of the Society, seeking to maintain the provision of activities that members are used to. We have lost several key Council Members through illness, completion of their term of office or through moving away from Edinburgh. We have particularly admired the devotion of Joanie McNaughton and Jane Squirrell who have served beyond reasonable expectation. Recruitment has been difficult, but several Members to whom we are much indebted, have stepped into the breach. Some have come back onto Council for a second or third time.

Council have plugged the gap left by the retirement of the Hon. Secretary, distributing the burden and taking on duties on an *ad hoc* basis. Peter Tothill has become Minutes Secretary; it is good to have John Watson back as Librarian; Rebecca Yahr has most ably continued to carry out the duties of Hon. Treasurer; Molly Woolgar and David Adamson have stepped into vacancies on the Excursion Committee; Phil McInnes has become Organiser for the winter lecture programme; and Tom Delaney has accepted the challenge of becoming Editor of the Journal. I thank all the above for stepping forward.

The major item of business at our AGM in October is to elect Officers of the Society. We will then have vacancies for both President and Secretary. These positions are self-evidently central to the operation of the Council and the Society: without them we will have increasing difficulty in continuing to function as we have hitherto. I would urge every member, therefore, to please give serious thought to identifying and nominating suitable individuals for Council and particularly for these two key posts. Details of all Council responsibilities and procedures can be had from myself.

My period in office concludes in October, and I would hope that an enthusiastic volunteer will be found to take over the Presidency. It is a job of privilege in an ancient and learned organisation. It is also a post which, through participation, delivers great satisfaction and pleasure. It affords the opportunity of working with dedicated and conscientious friends, meeting and hosting eminent persons from the world of natural history and directing assistance to other similar conservation organisations as part of a charitable network. I wish my successor all the joy and satisfaction I have experienced in the office and the opportunity to perpetuate the ideals of the Society.

You need only read on to be reminded that our Society excursions take us to the most notable sites in Scotland where unusual habitats and rare species are often found. Even in the depths of winter good attendance on excursions continues. Similarly, we are privileged to have entertaining and exciting speakers throughout the winter talks programme. Cordial and interesting friendships are a measure of the support we offer each other at these times.

OBITUARIES

Elizabeth Pilling

Elizabeth Pilling, who died in November, trained as a dentist, and her early years were active ones, with hill-walking, skiing and bird-watching. She came to botany and to the Natural History Society relatively late but led a number of outings, including the 'alpine' meeting to Schiehallion in 2004, which she took over when I was ill. It wasn't much later that her own health started to deteriorate, and she left the Nats but continued to do voluntary work for the Botanic Garden for as long as she was able.

Jackie Muscott

Elsbeth Hamilton

Elsbeth joined the Society in 1957 and served on the Council and on the Excursion Committee for seven years. She enjoyed all aspects of natural history; wild flowers and birds were her great joy. She knew the countryside around Eskbank very well, having lived there all her life.

Elsbeth led many excursions from 1960 to 1980 and worked on various surveys, particularly of newt populations in the Lothians, flowers of roadside verges and the wildlife of Milkhall pond.

She taught at George Heriot's Junior School before she had family commitments. Memories are of Elsbeth in Newbattle Woods, of snowdrops and of bird-song.

Connie Stewart

Margaret Little

Margaret, who died recently aged 94, was an enthusiastic member of the Nats for many years. Even though she lived in Galashiels, she managed to attend a surprising number of meetings and outings. When I first met her, she was Chairman of Central Borders SWT and, pleased to find we had a common interest in botany among all the birders, she suggested that I too could join the Nats. It was the start of my membership and many more trips together. At that time she was involved in recording for the Flora of the Lothians, and later on we worked together for the BSBI Atlas 2000 in our home area. Cromarty turned out to be the last year Margaret managed a long holiday with us and was, maybe, the first time she actually agreed to stay put. She had occasionally caused mild panic in the past, when, rather than have forty winks in the place arranged, she'd go wandering around looking for plants, find a different shady spot and fall asleep there. And who could ever forget the sight of her being lifted bodily from one slab of limestone pavement to another, so keen was she to view the many rarities to be found. That was at Arnside. Her enthusiasm for natural history never waned, and she continued to take pleasure in hearing about the activities of the Nats right to the end of her long life.

Jean Murray

Margaret Mowat

Margaret was a member of the Society for 50 years and greatly enjoyed our excursions, particularly when the main interest was birds. She was also a keen member of the SOC and of Keith Macgregor's bird group, with whom she took many trips, including visits to Holland, Spain and Portugal. She is remembered by her friends as always eager to see new birds and always grateful for help in finding them. She would show her gratitude with unusual presents such as, on one occasion, a large Dutch apple pie. She also had a keen interest in wild flowers and was helpful to others on these expeditions. To the end of her days, Margaret was happiest driving around East Lothian, searching for and recording her beloved birds.

Connie Stewart

A CALLING OF QUAIL

Abbie Marland

The Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* is a sporadic summer visitor from North Africa to East Lothian, more frequently heard than seen. This delightful, tiny game-bird calls from cover, is often nocturnal and normally swift to remove itself from disturbance. Migration apparently takes place by night, with its preferred destination in Scotland being lowland meadows and spring-barley crops. Secretive and beautifully camouflaged, both chicks and adult birds are tricky to observe or photograph.

But just occasionally, there are years when, for whatever reason, numbers rise, and we are treated to an insight of Quail behaviour and ecology. Having occupied a niche in East Lothian to which Quail have faithfully returned most years since 1982, I've had a unique opportunity to watch and listen. Observing often means much time spent waiting patiently in silence, but this practice means that awareness is heightened, and patterns emerge that might otherwise remain overlooked. The 2009 season, by lucky chance, was particularly good.

The study area occupies a valley close to the southern coast of the Forth, where many European migrant species make landfall. It is an unremarkable, intensively cultivated, lowland arable farm, with little shelter. However, the potentially very poor habitat is improved by dense vegetation along a small, deep-sided burn and by a track which offers a permanent, weedy sward. Perhaps significantly, general access is not encouraged, so that walkers and their dogs are few. The valley is also perfectly shaped to enable communication - containing useful pockets of silence along the track and burn, together with slopes which efficiently reflect sound.

In 2009, the first calling male Quail announced its presence from a dense crop of oilseed rape on May 13th. We came within feet of one another on numerous occasions, though the birds were only ever heard, not seen. In June, however, I flushed a pair enjoying a dust bath, and by the end of that month three other males had arrived on site to set up territories. Short flights above spring barley and winter wheat were common, as birds established songlines and attracted mates.

Communal use of the track fell, and five territories, all aligned to physical landscape features of burn and track, were in place by early July. I learned to identify each individual male by elements of its call – the familiar tri-syllabic 'wet-my-lips' being only one part of a bird's repertoire. Other sub-songs were audible at close range, with social exchange between pairs clearly in play. Interaction was, of course, most obvious when males called in direct challenge. Such combat was usually where territories met – projected with ear-splitting energy!

A musical map thus emerged. This gave rise to interesting observations of the daily 'beating of the bounds' by established males and the discovery that several local species of warbler (plus a skylark) had incorporated Quail notes into their own songs. Such effects could sometimes draw an unwary listener in entirely the wrong direction, and led me to wonder what the purpose of such mimicry might be. Local raptors also had the measure of each territory, working tramlines hard as the cereal crops grew higher. Despite witnessing several determined attempts by Buzzards, which sometimes stooped from considerable height, I never saw success. However, an adult Quail carcass was reported from a Peregrine food cache elsewhere in East Lothian during the 2009 season.

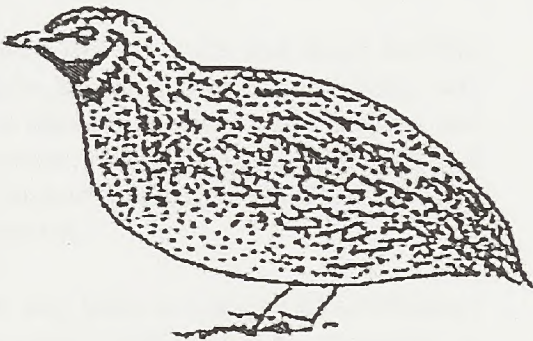
In mid-July, domestic order was rudely interrupted by a flurry of new arrivals into the valley. At the peak of

this temporary influx, 11 calling males were present. Quite a rumpus ensued, and it was during a protest on July 18th by resident birds that I had the luck to be able to take photographs of one individual in full call. His performance, delivered from a prime position (a hillock with Pineapple Weed *Matricaria discoidea*), was completely electrifying. The hopeful incoming challenger, calling only five feet from the dominant resident, remained invisible. This is of interest, because a more distant observer would have been unable to distinguish, either by ear or eye, that there were two different birds, hence under-recording numbers.

The overlay of new arrivals appeared to disperse, and I was not able to pick out additional territories. Perhaps the habitat had reached its carrying capacity. But confirmation of breeding success was achieved (hoorah) rather unexpectedly in late August, when, walking at the edge of a crop, I flushed a group of five chicks. A second batch of three chicks, with downier plumage, was seen in early September, while adults were being dislodged by late combine harvesting.

By the end of the summer, reports from across East Lothian confirmed that, indeed, 2009 was not only a record-breaker for Painted Lady butterflies, but for Quail too. I certainly look forward to their return next spring. Perhaps the Whitethroats and Sedge Warblers will herald that event.

*A fuller account of these events is in preparation for Scottish Birds.
One of Abbie's extraordinary Quail photographs appears in the centre-spread*



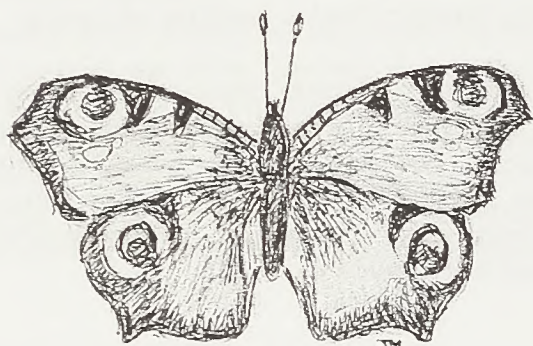
A SUNNY AFTERNOON WALK

Jackie Muscott

A casual visit to Blackford Glen on a sunny afternoon at the end of June 2009 gave me a great deal of pleasure. Starting from Blackford Pond I walked past the allotments and scrambled over the bit of broken wall into the rough meadow beyond. Ringlet butterflies must just have emerged, and, before I had gone very far, I counted 50, along with a dozen or so Meadow Browns, a number of Chimney Sweeper moths, and 20 or so 7-spot Ladybirds and larvae.

In some trees at the edge of the field, a bird of prey screamed. There is a Sparrowhawk's nest in a shattered tree, clearly visible in the winter, but concealed by leaves at this time of year. As I watched both parent birds came to the nest.

In Blackford Glen proper, they were still building the flood defences, and there were mounds of earth by the path, colourful with weeds – Poppies *Papaver rhoeas*, Charlock *Sinapis arvensis*, various Fumitories *Fumaria* spp. and of course Nettles *Urtica dioica*. My attention was soon attracted by three large black patches on the Nettles, which on closer examination turned out to be caterpillars of the Peacock butterfly. I fear they may not have survived, for next time I visited, the mounds of earth and all the weeds had been swept away.



Peacock butterfly

Elsewhere in the Glen, Swallows were flying, Blackbirds and Thrushes were singing, a Wren was swearing, and a flock of twittery birds (?Goldfinches) flew past. Stream Water Crowfoot *Ranunculus penicillatus* ssp. *pseudofluitans* was flowering in the river and a Grey Wagtail flicked past. A Skylark soared and sang in a nearby field, a Robin added its voice and so did a Chiffchaff.

Only the pond disappointed. The swans have failed to produce young for the last two years, and the other birds seem to lose their chicks very quickly, presumably to rats or the Greater Black-backed Gulls which have settled in Edinburgh during the last few years, and frequent the pond. There was a Coots' nest with young, and I wished them luck as I made my way home.

CURIOSITY AND LEARNING

Sarah Adamson

In May 2009, I, like many others decided to be enthusiastic about growing more vegetables at home. I noticed the small circle of grass under the rotary washing line and by manipulating 'Pi' knew that I could cut out an 80cm radius of turf and edge the circumference (5m) of grass with bricks. This would still allow me to peg items on the line and the washing would not get muddy.

An energetic afternoon's work removed the turf with some soil and placed the bricks around the cut edge. This process yielded three pupae resembling those of the Yellow/Orange Underwing group of moths which are common in our garden, usually turning out to be *Noctua pronuba*. This bed now hosts some culinary herbs and low growing edible crops such as endive, lettuce and beets.

The pupae were placed in a small observation tank with some moist compost. After a few days an attractive yellow and black wasp appeared, and was liberated. These wasps often appear and it did not get the attention that it deserved and its origin was not considered.

Next, one of the expected moths was liberated. At this stage when removing an empty pupa case I noted it to be neatly cut around the rounded end. A day or so later I noticed another empty case but no moth, this one being roughly split along its length. As one intact pupa remained and we had two empty cases opened by different means there needed to be some explanation. From 'A' level biology many years ago I remembered looking at Ichneumon Wasps but they were tiny, and this wasp was about 2cm in length. A quick look in Chinery (1986)* revealed a likely species *Amblyteles armatorius*, an endoparasite on noctuids. An Internet search quickly took me to a page created by Alan Silverside for students at Paisley University www-biol.paisley.ac.uk/bioref/Animalia_inverts/Amblyteles_armatorius.html. Since this isn't his usual field of expertise he tentatively confirmed my reasoning as to the identity of our wasp. This resource which helped me to find an answer is likely to be removed from the Internet in the near future. However, Alan

Silverside has his own site with photographs and information and can be viewed at www.lastdragon.org/ and is well worth a visit.

This incident has reminded me that natural history can be studied in our back gardens and inspires me to regard our human environment more highly and not to make assumptions. The final pupa turned out to be another *N. pronuba*.

**Michael Chinery 1986 Collins Guide To The Insects Of Britain And Western Europe Collins Glasgow*

BREEDING BIRDS AT VOGRIE

Neville Crowther

The woodlands along the River Tyne at Vogrie Country Park, Midlothian, like most of the county's gorge woodlands have avoided clear felling mainly because of their riverine topography. However here, there has been some exploitation of timber resources including the coppicing of alder for charcoal. For both historical and educational reasons the Ranger Service decided to reimpose alder coppicing as a management tool. In 1996, several local naturalists mobilised by Win Elsley were asked if they would monitor the breeding birds on a 14 hectare site, which included this coppice. At the time, the British Trust for Ornithology wanted members to census new woodland sites, and their Common Bird Census (CBC) methodology was appropriate for our local needs. We would thus be contributing to a local as well as a national need for data.



A group of eight volunteers began that spring. The Ranger Service were strongly involved in the census from the start, providing maps and a meeting place as well as participating in field work. Experienced people were paired with less experienced, and there was constant discussion of methods to ensure consistency of effort as well as accuracy. There are ten or 11 site visits per breeding season between March and July, involving two or three observers on each occasion, usually for about two hours.

Although BTO were complimentary about our efforts, their support was withdrawn from this site and about half the other CBC sites throughout the UK after the 2000 season. It was said that the new Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) was preferred as an alternative monitoring system for breeding birds, as it was less labour-intensive, more random and cheaper. We, like most of the CBC individuals and teams decided to continue, because, unlike the BBS, CBC provided a valuable, site-specific data-base for future management. Two years later BTO support was withdrawn from all CBC schemes, although BTO continue to welcome our data, which we now process ourselves.



After 14 years of field work, it is gratifying to see that there is a degree of consistency from year to year, with slight deviations in the results, explainable by variations in weather, observer effort or national trends. Our personnel have changed over time, but we are now a more self-confident and more knowledgeable group. Our results are given in the accompanying Table.

For the last few years we have included census visits at dusk to pick up roding Woodcock and calling owls. An unexpected bonus was to witness the remarkable extent of activity of Roe Deer, Foxes, Badgers, bats and, not to be forgotten, midges. The pleasure has been shared by us all. Though supprises are still eagerly awaited, the pattern of the familiar brings reassurance every year. Roll on next year.



The Table on the next two pages details the CBC results at Vogrie, 1996-2009

SPECIES	STATUS		BREEDING PAIRS															
	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009				
Grey Heron	V	P	P	P		2	P	P	P	P			P	P				
Mallard	B	P	P			1	1	P	1			1		P				
Buzzard	B	P		P	P	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	P				
Sparrow Hawk	B	P	P	P		1	1	1	1	P	1		1	P				
Kestrel	B	1	P	P	P	1	1	P	1	P	P							
Pheasant	B	3	3	1	3	3	2	4	3	3	3	4	4	2				
Oystercatcher	O	P		P			P		P									
Lapwing	O																	
Woodcock	B		P	6		P	4	4	3		2							
Wood Pigeon	B	7	6	4	4	4	2	6	7	6	4	3	5	9				
Stock Dove	B		P		P						P	1						
Tawny Owl	B	1		P	1	P	1	2	1		P	1	1	1				
Swift	V		P	P	P				P		P							
Green Woodpecker	V		P	P	P													
Gt. Spotted W'dpecker	B	1	P	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	2	2	1	3				
Swallow	V		P		P	P	P			P	P	P		P				
House Martin	V					P	P	P	P	P	P	P						
Grey Wagtail	V	P	P					P	P					P				
Dipper	B	P	P	P	P			P	P	P			1	1				
Wren	B	17	13	14	14	9	20	24	27	25	32	26	27	23				
Dunnock	B	1	2	2	2			1	1	1	2	P	P					
Robin	B	6	9	10	11	5	7	13	15	17	12	15	13	14				
Blackbird	B	11	4	7	9	8	11	10	8	8	9	8	12	10				
Song Thrush	B	5	4	4	5	2	4	3	4	6	4	4	2	4				
Redwing	W							P										
Fieldfare	W				P													
Mistle Thrush	B	P		1	P	P	P	2	P	3	P	2	2	1				
Whitethroat	B	3	3	1	P	P	1	1	1	1	1	P	1					
Blackcap	B	4	6	3	6	4	6	6	6	8	9	9	3	9				
Garden Warbler	B	P	2	1	1	P	P	1	2	1	3	2	1	3				
Chiff Chaff	B	3	3	4	4	5	6	5	8	3	5	6	10	9				
Willow Warbler	B	13	10	6	10	9	11	7	5	8	9	8	5	8				
Goldcrest	B	1	P	P	1	1	1	1	3	2	3	2	3	2				
Spotted Flycatcher	B	P		P				P	P									

SPECIES	BREEDING PAIRS												STATUS	
	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Long tailed Tit	1	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	3	3
Coal Tit	1	3	2	1	1	2	3	2	2	4	3	2	3	p
Blue Tit	7	9	7	5	5	3	6	7	7	8	7	6	5	6
Great Tit	7	6	5	5	4	4	4	3	8	6	7	5	4	4
Tree Creeper	1	p	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	p	2	1	2	
Jackdaw		1	1	p	1	1	1	p	p	p				1
Rook	1													
Carriion Crow	1	1	p	p	1	1		1	1	p	p	1	p	1
Magpie					p	p						p	p	1
Starling	1								p	1				
House Sparrow					p									
Chaffinch	24	24	20	24	17	19	25	15	22	22	32	23	23	28
Siskin					p		p	p			p	1		
Greenfinch	1	1	p	p	1		p	p	1	p	1	p		
Goldfinch	p	p	p	p		p	p	1	p	p	1		p	p
Linnet	p										p			
Redpoll							p							
Bullfinch	2	p	p	p	p	1	p	2	1	2	1	1	1	p
Yellow Hammer	2	1	1	p		p					p			
Jay										1	1		p	p
Cuckoo										p				
Goosander										p				
Sand Martin										p				
Pied Wagtail										p		p		
TOTALS														
territories	124	113	96	105	104	91	116	123	145	142	157	137	135	145
breeding species	25	23	20	20	23	24	24	27	28	24	27	26	25	23
species also present	12	14	17	16	11	10	11	9	9	14	11	7	6	10
total species	37	37	37	36	34	34	35	36	37	38	38	33	31	33

Abbreviations: B= breeding; V=present but insufficient evidence for breeding; W=winter visitor; O= overflying site; p= present

SEVEN-SPOT LADYBIRDS

Jackie Muscott

Towards the end of last century, the population of Seven-spot Ladybirds exploded, with people reporting plagues of the usually popular insect. By 2001, however, all this had changed, for the population of a parasitic wasp also boomed and the Seven-spots went into serious decline. The tiny wasp *Dinocampus coccinellae* lays one of its eggs into the ladybird. The egg hatches, and the larva grows inside its host, eventually eating its way out and making a cocoon under the protection of the ladybird's body (the striking colours of the ladybird are a warning to predators that it is nasty).

The real worry in 2001 was not so much that the Seven-spot Ladybird would be wiped out, but that the wasp would turn its attention to other much rarer ladybirds. (In fact it was discovered that one ladybird, the Two-spot, was immune from the wasp's attentions, but most of the others could be affected.)

Presumably the wasp soon went into decline for lack of prey, and the Seven-spots have gradually recovered. In fact 2009 seems to have been a good year for them. I've seen small numbers on many occasions and much larger numbers on one or two. Near Gullane on June 18 we counted over 40 Seven-spot chrysalids on plastic tree-protectors as well as a good number of newly emerged adults. At Dumbarnie on June 20 I counted 14 or so larvae on Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra* (along with plenty of Blackfly) and more on thistles. And at Longniddry on July 1 there were around 40 adults as well as larvae and chrysalids.

I haven't yet seen a Harlequin Ladybird, which I suppose is the next problem.

FORTH ISLAND SEA BIRD COUNTS 2009

Bill Bruce

Unfortunately, at the time of writing, I have not received all the figures for the seabird counts on May Isle. However, on the other islands in the Firth of Forth, the numbers of seabirds attempting to breed would seem to have increased this year. This follows a number of years where the general trend has been downwards. In summary, Fulmar are up by 27%, Cormorant by 4%, Shag by 9%, Kittiwake and Guillemot each by 10%. Razorbill is the one species where breeding numbers have decreased, i.e. by 10%.

SUMMARY

x_ = present but no count, 0 = none breeding, AOS = apparently occupied sites, AOB = apparently occupied burrows

	Bass	C'leith	Lamb	Fidra	Inchkeith	Carr Craig	Inchcolm	Haystack	Inch- mickery	Inchgarvie	May	Total
Fulmar (AOS)	c44	147	14	204	247	0	180	0	30	235	x	1101+
Cormorant (nests)	0	50	52	0	75	92	0	0	0	0	0	269
Shag (nests)	c15	200	75	159	162	20	6	0	54	0	521	1212+
Gannet (nests)	x	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	x
Eider (nests)	x	204	x	70- 100+	x	1	191	0	51	84	x	601+
Great B-b Gull (nests)	x	21	3	2	5	1	0	1	1	1	x	35+
Lesser B-b Gull (nests)	x	x	x	x	x	c5	c2600	6	x	c16	x	2627+
Herring Gull (nests)	x	x	x	x	x	c50	c650	8	x	259	x	967+
Kittiwake (nests)	425	594	82	237	344	0	92	0	0	0	x	1774+
Common Tern (nests)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	x	x
Arctic Tern (nests)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	x	x
Roseate Tern (nests)												
Sandwich Tern (nests)	0	0	0		0	0	0	0	0	0		
Razorbill (pairs/sites)	c70	117	70	127	54	0	4	0	0	0	x	442+
Guillemot (birds on cliffs)	c2550	c1800	c2200	524	49	0	0	0	0	0	x	7123+
Puffin (birds unless otherwise stated)	a few	c4500 AOB	x	c800 AOB	1157 on sea	0	0?	0	0	0	45,000 AOB	50,000+ AOB

The general feeling is that the SOS Puffin Project’s work to control Trec Mallow on Craigleith and Fidra is having a positive effect. Although fresh seedlings continue to germinate, the volunteers manage to chop down the majority of the plants before they mature and produce seeds.

So that the effect of this work can be quantified in future years, a day was spent on these two islands counting the apparently occupied Puffin burrows. As expected, this year’s figures are just a fraction of the last estimates made in 2003. For comparison, the Puffin numbers on May Isle have increased by about 7% compared to last year, or decreased by about 35% compared to 2003.

Due to the time and manpower required, the Forth Seabird Group does not count the numbers of breeding gulls on all the islands in the Forth. This year an effort was made to try and find a simple solution to rectifying this. The plan was to do a ground count and also take aerial photographs, then compare the two sets of figures. The difference between the two counts would then indicate what correction factor would need to be applied to the aerial count to account for hidden nests, etc.

To this end, a small party worked their way around Inchcolm counting the gull nests. They also did sample counts from various vantage points. A small plane had been booked for a flight a few days later to do the aerial count. Unfortunately, due to the weather conditions, the flight had to be postponed. Other problems then meant that the aerial

count never took place. If the aerial photographs method can be made to work, then for the price of hiring a small plane for a couple of hours, an estimate of gull numbers might be obtained for all the Forth islands.

Most years we see small increases or decreases in the number of breeding seabirds. However when compared to the first counts, which took place 50 years ago, things are quite different. Some islands have seen new species moving in e.g. on Inchkeith no Kittiwakes bred before 1961, no Razorbill before 1965 and no Shags before 1974.

Some islands have seen dramatic changes e.g. Bass Rock. In 1969 there were 9,000 pairs of breeding Gannets, and the islands green “top” was the nesting ground for 1,100 pairs of gulls. Today the green “top” has gone, as have the gulls, and there are now (2004) 48,000 pairs of Gannets. Finally, some species have seen dramatic changes. For example in 1959 there were circa 2,000 pairs of terns (including Roseate: 300-400 pairs and Sandwich: 610 pairs) breeding on the Forth islands. Today (2008), there are just over 700 breeding pairs - but the Sandwich and Roseates have all but gone.

Thanks are due to the Forth Seabird Group for allowing the use of their figures.

IDENTIFYING FUNGI

Samantha Ranscombe

Thanks to financial support from the Society I was able to attend the course “Identifying Fungi” at Kindrogan Field Centre. I hope you will enjoy this report on my findings and experiences.

I have been studying fungi since October 2008 when I joined the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) as the Natural Talent Mycology Apprentice. This scheme aims to train the next generation of specialists in areas where experts are retiring and their skills and knowledge are no longer being passed on in modern university courses. There are currently Apprentices studying lichens, bryophytes, moths, hoverflies and habitats such as machair, wetland and peatland, and there will be another 12 apprenticeships offered in the future.

I am the second Apprentice to be studying mycology through the scheme, and my focus is learning how to identify wood-rotting fungi. The first Mycology Apprentice, Nev Kilkenny, focused on agarics and is now working as a freelance mycologist in Scotland. These apprenticeships are based at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) and are mentored by Professor Roy Watling.

The 8-day residential course at Kindrogan was highly recommended by Roy (who used to teach it), Nev and members of the Fungus Group of South East Scotland. Having come to an interest in fungi only quite recently, I was nervous that I might find the course difficult, but the tutor Liz Holden was wonderful, patiently spending time with each group member and helping us work at our own level of knowledge and understanding.

Our days on the course were spent foraging and collecting specimens in the morning, identifying specimens in the afternoons and evenings, and listening to talks on macro and micro identification, woodland fungi and grassland fungi. Foray locations included Faskally, Birks of Aberfeldy and Black Spout Wood, as well as a longer day at Lochan Mor on the Rothiemurchus Estate, with habitats including semi-natural broad-leaved woodland, mature conifer plantation and unimproved grassland - some quite stunning, beautiful areas rich in fungal flora.

The weather could not have been better, with dry warm days of autumnal sunshine, but we were concerned that we might therefore find fewer fungi: thankfully that was not the case. Exciting finds included a carpet of beautiful *Ramaria stricta* (Upright Coral) on a wood-chip pile at Faskally, the tooth fungus *Sarcodon squamosus* (Scaly Tooth) at Lochan Mor and *Strobilomyces strobilaceus* (Old Man of the Woods) at Black Spout Wood. We also found *Laetiporus sulphureus* (Chicken of the Woods) and *Grifola frondosa* (Hen of the Woods) which is meant to smell like mice! The week continued to be a veritable feast on the nose as we found *Clitocybe fragrans* (aniseed), *Lactarius glyciosmus* (coconut), *Russula xerampelina* (fish), *Tricholoma saponaceum* (soap) and *Lactarius camphoratus* (curry).

I used the week to focus on one or two genera a day, so that I could really get to know their “jizz”: it was a good opportunity to learn more about agaric and bolete genera, as my apprenticeship is mostly focusing on bracket and crust wood-rotting fungi. I also used the time and the expertise on hand to practise microscope techniques, looking at cell and spore structures, shapes and sizes to help identify specimens to species.

The course was an invaluable part of my apprenticeship, helping me practise existing identification skills as well as teaching me new techniques. I was inspired and encouraged by the tutor, Liz, who works as a freelance mycologist in Scotland. I hope I can use all I gained from this course, and from all my apprenticeship experiences to help me enthuse

and engage the next generation of mycologists. I would recommend this course to anyone of whatever age or ability interested in learning about fungi. For more details on “Identifying Fungi” and other natural-history courses at Kindrogan Field Centre, you can call 01250 870150 or visit www.field-studies-council.org.

PLACE NAMES

Elizabeth Farquharson

Through the passage of time, we become so accustomed to place names that we rarely think how those names were acquired. Many have an historical origin, and some are named after royalty, famous people or local worthies. Princes Street, Charlotte Square and George Square are named after royalty while Chambers Street and Drummond Place commemorate local people. Two names of historical interest are Tollcross and Cameron Toll, but I doubt if many of us could vouch for the original sites of the toll gates.

Some names started as nicknames, and it was only a matter of time before the name became permanently established. The Mound is the best known example of this. A huge pile of excavated earth and stones became a convenient route between the Old Town and the New. Church Hill probably acquired its name in the same way, and it will not be long before Holy Corner appears on the street maps.

Water power was needed for running grain mills and other industries. Peffermill was a small mill on the Peffer Burn, conveniently close to farmland, as transport would be by horse and cart.. Canonmills is another well known area. The mills there were owned by the monks of Holyrood and used water from the Water of Leith and Canonmills Loch to run their machinery. Nearby is Goldenacre, where old prints show cattle grazing in green fields. Did it get its name because the farmland was so good? Other industrial concerns on the Water of Leith in that area have no natural history interest but historically refer to their original trades. Powderhall made explosives and Beaverhall made fur top-hats.

Some streets have kept names that refer to their earlier usage. Canongate was the gait or way used by the townsfolk, while the Cowgate was used by countryfolk bringing produce and animals into the Grassmarket and Haymarket. Edinburgh's early piped water supply came from the springs at Comiston, just beyond the Braid Burn Valley Park. This area is just above the level of the upper end of the High Street, and so gravity could be used to keep the water flowing to the pumps that were placed at intervals down the High Street. The pipes from the various springs were given animal names and had an effigy attached to the pipe for the benefit of those workmen who could not read. The old wells are now closed, and some are remembered by Comiston, Fox and Swan being incorporated in street names.

The quarries around Edinburgh were famous. They supplied stone for the building of the New Town and shipped stone from Leith to London and overseas. Some of the quarries were quite small, like Maidencraig opposite the entrance to Ravelston Wood in Blackhall. A garage, now gone, and some of the streets in the area carry the name. Craigleith was a much bigger quarry, and the site remained an eyesore for many years. In its heyday the quarry produced a large fossilised tree trunk which now stands in the grounds of the Natural History Museum in London. When the site was levelled, the shopping area built on the site kept the name Craigleith.

The two large quarries at Craigmillar were probably named after the Castle, and many streets carry the name. The bigger quarry is now a City rubbish dump (recycling point). A smaller quarry just behind it was found by me many years ago when it contained explosives. It has been infilled, and houses are now on the level ground.

If one moves further afield along the coast, two of the towns have names related to their former importance. Musselburgh had a thriving mussel industry for many years, but sewage entering the Forth polluted the beds and the mussels were no longer safe to eat. Further along the coast, Prestonpans is a reminder of the days when sea water was trapped at high tide and panned over flat surfaces. When the water had evaporated the salt was gathered. The industry died when cheaper imported salt became available. Some places, not in our area, have acquired names which are less attractive but self-explanatory. In this category are Limekilns and Coaltown of Wemyss.

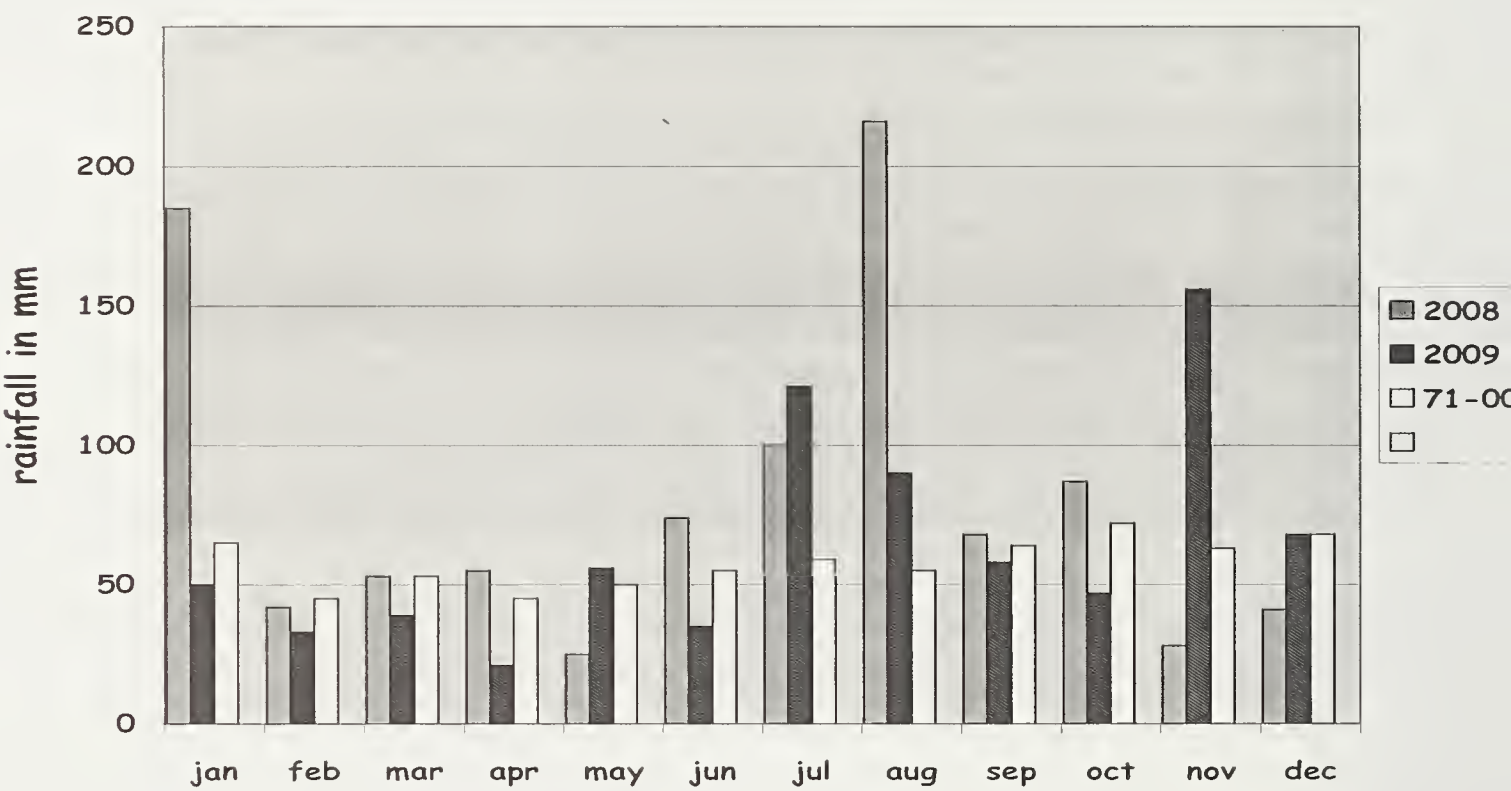
Near Perth there is an area known as Bleachfields. This goes back to the days when there was a linen industry in the area and flax was grown in Scotland. On old maps the parish of Uphall is given as Strathbrock, and Broxburn has kept faith with its flourishing Badger population. Badgers were nearly wiped out in the early 1900s but are now once again well established in the parish.

Leadburn and Silverburn are said to have acquired their names because those metals were found there. It has been said that silver from Silverburn was incorporated in the Scottish Crown Jewels, but this may not be true. One small street, Lochrin, in the Tollcross area, has me puzzled. Is there a burn underground which used to run into the loch which used to occupy the Meadows area?

RAINFALL IN CORSTORPHINE... A YEAR OF CONTRAST

Munro Dunn

2009 was a year of marked contrast between the first six months and the last. Of the first six months, five produced rainfall well below average, resulting in an overall deficit of 26% for the period. In contrast, in the second half of the year, July August and November were substantially wetter than normal. Although the three other months, August, September and December, had rainfall at or below average, overall the second half-year was 42% wetter than average. The total rainfall recorded for 2009 was above average, 774mm as against an average of 694mm for the 30 years from 1971 to 2000.



COMPARISON OF RAINFALL IN 2008 AND 2009 WITH THE AVERAGE FOR 1971-2000 (in mm)

jan	feb	mar	apr	may	jun	jul	aug	sep	oct	nov	dec	total	
185	42	53	55	25	74	100	216	68	87	28	41	974	2008
50	33	39	21	56	35	121	90	58	47	156	68	774	2009
65	45	53	45	50	55	59	55	64	72	63	68	694	1971-2000

Although the first half of the year was relatively dry, it contained no long runs of dry days. The longest such run was the eight days from 27th May to 3rd June inclusive. (The previous year’s longest dry spell also came in late May, but it would not be safe to assume that that will be the best time to take this year’s holidays.) April, with 21mm, was the driest month.

Although the second half of the year was much wetter than average, no records were broken, not even in November. However, that month’s total came very close to the 158mm of November 1984.

The year’s excess rainfall was due in almost equal measure to more frequent falls and heavier falls. On 199 days significant amounts of rain fell, as compared with the average of 185 days. The heaviest daily fall was 38mm on 1st November, and the longest run of significantly wet days was 16 from 13th to 28th July.

2009 ...YEAR OF RARITIES

Neville Crowther

The year 2009 will no doubt be remembered by much of the world for depressing events: violence in Afghanistan and other war-torn countries; the danger of global economic collapse; climatic catastrophes from Cumbria to China. However, at the year's end, my happy recollections will be of the large number of rare plants and animals that have crossed my path and of the unusual incidents witnessed in the natural world. Many of these memories are from Society excursions.

Remember the Bohemian Waxwings which descended on the UK the previous autumn? They were reported in flocks of hundreds throughout the Lothians.... except by me. So it was perhaps a promising sign for the year ahead that in January, at last, I began to see them, flocking like Starlings and inundating any shrub or tree with intact fruit. The hips and haws around Tranent Cemetery were a big attraction and marked my first red-letter day.

Our search for unusual plants had its first successes at Loch Lomond National Nature Reserve in May. Here in the area called Aber Bog we discovered Tufted Loosestrife *Lysimachia thyrsiflora*, found only in swamps in the central belt of Scotland, Scottish Dock *Rumex aquaticus* at the only site anywhere in the UK and Elongated Sedge *Carex elongata* also very rare in Scotland. Sadly we were a month or so too early for sightings of the Purple Hairstreaks *Neozephyrus quercus* at their most northerly site in the Sessile Oaks of Loch Lomondside, but it was some compensation to find ourselves in the midst of a moving migratory stream of Painted Ladies. Perhaps 50 an hour were observed by our small group, passing northwards.

Our trip to Galloway in June was a bonanza of riches. The Border is far more than a political one. It marks the southern limit for some species and the northern limit for others, and our species lists were to benefit from these and many other rarities. At the Knowe Top Lochs reserve we found several Large Heath butterflies in flight on June 8th, the first hatch of the year. According to the convenor Graham Smith, this very day was the earliest for flight records on the reserve. Later that night Natalie's band of roving bat-recorders identified among four more common species, a Noctule Bat along the River Cree, unusual in Scotland. Later in the week, in the Galloway Forest at night, again led by Natalie and her friend Ann, we found four 'churring' Nightjars, a rare bird in Scotland. The midges were equally memorable for other reasons. Also during our trip, several people saw Red Squirrels on the fringes of the Galloway Forest Park. It is hoped that the remnants of a once widespread population will, with help, start to expand.

The flowering plants in the south-west however were most exciting. Even Jackie ticked off a few firsts. On and around the fossil cliff-line near St.Ninian's Cave we identified the only Scottish sites for Bithynian Vetch *Vicia bithynica* and Ivy Broomrape *Orobanche hederæ*. The former had not been seen for years until Roger's climbing skills led to us finding about ten blooms. Nearby Yellow Vetch *Vicia lutea*, at its northern limit on the Solway coast, was growing profusely in the cliff-face scrub.

On the shingle beaches of Luce Bay many plants were also established near their latitudinal limits. Scots Lovage *Ligusticum scoticum* and Oyster plant *Mertensia maritima* were at their most southerly. At its northern extreme is Sea Kale *Crambe maritima*, which is found almost exclusively on the shingle beaches of Dumfries and Galloway. Also at their northern limit were the two spurges, Portland Spurge *Euphorbia portlandica* and Sea Spurge *Euphorbia paralias* (except for one site on Islay) at their only Scottish sites on the Solway. Another spectacular plant, the umbellifer Spignel *Meum athamanticum* was found on our last day near its most southerly site in Scotland in the Galloway Forest.

At St Cyrus in July we ticked off Clustered Bellflower *Campanula glomerata* and Maiden Pink *Dianthus deltoides*, both sparsely distributed in eastern Scotland on dry base-rich grassland. In August, on the Tummel shingle islands, we had an eclectic mixture of flowers seeded from unknown upstream sources, including a neophyte Chinese Ragwort *Sinocalia tangutica*, an archeophyte Pale Toadflax *Linaria repens* and a species at the northern limit of its range, Trailing Cinquefoil *Potentilla anglica*. A week or two later high on the crags of Ben Vrackie, we were delighted to find several arctic alpine rarities, including Alpine Milk Vetch *Astragalus alpinus*, Purple Oxytropis *Oxytropis halleri* and Alpine Mouse Ear *Cerastium alpinum*.

Benefitting from a few days of glorious June sunshine in Sutherland with Sue and friends, we were fortunate to find Scottish Primrose *Primula scotica* where it is restricted to coastal grasslands along the north coast and in Orkney. The pretty black and white moth, Argent and Sable a Notable B species, restricted to the north-west was light-trapped in Wester Ross. Arctic Skuas, since this year a newly Red-Listed species, were seen in Durness and Coigach. Does anyone else find that breeding pairs of this species always seem to comprise one dark and one light morph?

And why was a badger busily blundering along in the middle of a heather moor high in the Quartzite hills of Wester Ross, miles away from trees or pastures where it might normally be expected? No answer was forthcoming from sources I knew....

In contrast, how pleasing it was to unravel two mysteries involving colour- ringing of birds. One day in August we were standing beside Machrihanish Bird Observatory (why does it have such a grand name when it's only a shed?), watching a mixed flock of finches, mainly Twites, on the foreshore. I managed to snatch a few pictures as they repeatedly exploded into the air then swirled around, landing once more. It was only later that night when I examined my pictures that I saw that at least three of the birds were colour-ringed. Puzzling who to notify, I asked Dave Aiton about anyone he knew who ringed Twite. I was given the e-mail address of a Dave Sowter. There followed an illuminating interchange of correspondence with a group of Twite-ringing enthusiasts from north-west England who had been colour-ringing birds that they trapped in autumn, largely on the coast of Cumbria and Lancashire. To their surprise over the years it became apparent from ringing returns like mine, that most were not local birds from the English Pennines but ones breeding in the highlands and islands of western Scotland. This was another link in the chain!

The other incident was more local. It's always rewarding to watch a Dipper busily feeding on a moorland torrent. So, parked by the Leithen Water on a wet, cold December afternoon with little else to do, I ambitiously took a few record shots. Later, looking carefully at my only clear image, I saw the bird was colour-ringed, but could see only the left leg. I remembered from the Borders Bird Reports that Tom Dougall had been ringing Dippers in this area for years and so contacted him and sent him the picture. It was 'his' bird, but he could give me only limited information, because the species-specific information came from the colour-coding on the right leg. I decided, therefore, to look closely at my remaining two very blurred pictures: on one I could just detect two coloured streaks on the partly submerged right tarsus. Perhaps this was the key to its identity. Tom was able to identify it as one of a breeding pair ringed at that location a year or two before.

In the autumn, three American waders found themselves in East Lothian, all at the same time. Owing to the unpredictability of weather patterns, strays like these are occasionally swept to alien shores. Unlike rarities that take a lot of finding, these were all easy to see and highly rewarding in their appearance and behaviour. The first, a Lesser Yellowlegs, turned up at Aberlady in late summer and is still present as I write at New Year. Even for a novice it was easy to spot among the similar but larger native Redshanks, which also belong to the genus *Tringa*. A Baird's Sandpiper was reported on both sides of the Forth in October, and eventually the sightings became restricted to the area around Tynninghame Bay. This bird was more elusive than the Yellowlegs, and its identification was tricky because of its similarity to several other small species of *Calidris* sandpipers. The third and rarest was a Wilson's Phalarope, which stayed around the scrapes at Musselburgh for a couple of weeks. It was seen from the hides by hundreds of birders, pirouetting on the water with its distinctive feeding movement and dwarfed by the nearby Teal.

I apologise if my selection of highlights does not accord with yours. I've omitted many fine experiences. Someone else will doubtless describe them one day. All this has taken place in the only year since 1957 that I haven't travelled abroad. Scotland is such a fine place to live. Let's look after it !

EDINBURGH URBAN FOREST The Millennium Forest for Scotland

Sarah Adamson

From the idea in 1995 until the end of 2000 the people of Edinburgh created 71 woodlands. Some woodlands were planted in school grounds; in 2003 a nursery inspector commented that '*The layout enabled children to work and play safely and to explore the environment independently*'.

Since the planting of the pencil-thick trees there has been tremendous growth and varying amounts of management. Much of the management is undertaken by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV). Eunice Smith, ENHS, has been closely associated with several of the woodlands since their inception and on this occasion requested, on the behalf of the ENHS, the help of the BTCV to undertake some management at Drumbrae Community Centre. This wood, close to dense residential areas, has been well used and there is evidence of items used to build dens, some damage to lower branches and the formation of natural pathways through the wood. Some of the paths are well established and on slopes there are signs that children and animals have left the diagonal paths to break through more directly up and down the slope. As well as general maintenance, an aim of the day's work, which took place on 11th February, was to help improve visibility through the woodland, following an assault in the area.

The day's work was hard but invigorating, surrounded by snow and a bright sunny sky, and involved removing some damaged and lower branches, thereby 'lifting the crowns'. The woody waste was shredded and used to lay paths into the wood. Debris such as pieces of rope, broken tools, road signs and cones was removed from the site. Over lunch

some of the younger volunteers enjoyed sledging: the volunteers were from many backgrounds and included a few students, those interested in working out of doors and otherwise unemployed people.

The woodland had characteristic areas, perhaps influenced by aspect, slope and amount of usage but certainly there was evidence that wildlife had moved into the area. For me two highlights were firstly, that the Orange Ladybird had turned up in new woodland on a previously suburban sports field. From its first recording in this area of Scotland in early 1990s it now seems to be the most regularly seen local ladybird, turning up all around Corstorphine Hill in ivy, on wooden fences, on various species of trees and on headstones. Formerly, it was believed to be an indicator of ancient woodland and associated with sycamore. The Orange Ladybird, rather than feeding on aphids, feeds on mildew, particularly the sooty mould that grows in aphid honeydew. Then as the sun dropped down to the horizon a flock of Waxwings arrived, staying long enough for a photo. The main group of volunteers commented on a flock of birds but misidentified them as Bullfinches. The day ended with a feeling that I had undertaken some hard physical work but immensely satisfied from taking part in this venture.

ERGOTS

Jackie Muscott

Ergot *Claviceps purpurea* is a fungus that grows on the seeds of grasses, including cereals, and it's quite common in the autumn. In the past when it got into the food chain it could cause serious health problems, including convulsions, gangrene and death. In the right quantities it could be used by 'old wives' to cause abortions or to speed up childbirth. It contains a number of different chemicals, some of which are used in modern medicine to control bleeding after childbirth and to cure migraine. It also contains LSD.

However there is another species of Ergot *Claviceps nigricans* which grows on Spike Rushes *Eleocharis spp*, and I was delighted to find it at a number of ponds in the Lothians this year, including Drumtassie Forest in West Lothian and Penicuik Woods in Midlothian. Mary Clarkson found it at Tynninghame in East Lothian. It may have had a good year this year, but I shall certainly look out for it in future.

Review

A PUBLICATION TO SAVOUR

Neville Crowther

I have been an enthusiastic subscriber to *British Wildlife* since the '90s. My first impressions were of excellent illustrations - photographs, charts, Tables, maps and paintings - and of clear, uncluttered layout of text, with commercial interest restricted to the end-papers. I became used to regular features on conservation, wildlife records, book reviews and a lively correspondence section. Frequently it includes articles on: identification of unusual groups; site surveys; single-species issues; politically sensitive topics. It is a delight to devour it bimonthly and to add it to my growing reference collection.

I was particularly pleased to have my long-held view of its excellence confirmed in the issue of December 2008. On one leaf, there were three references to ENHS members and, only a few pages earlier, mention of two others. I summarize these contributions below.

Rebecca Yahr's research into medieval lichens is given great prominence. The magazine reports that she collects surviving lichens (and mosses) from building timbers, often over 500 years old, and compares their present and ancient distribution patterns. This allows speculation about the causes of the changes.

Mary Clarkson is praised for the discovery of a rust fungus long thought to be extinct. She found it on Mountain Sorrel *Oxyria digyna* on one of our excursions!

Roy Watling's retirement is offered as a prime example of the losses suffered by British mycology of experts in systematics who are not being replaced, owing to misguided Government priorities.

Jane Squirrel has been able through her expertise in DNA analysis to confirm the accuracy of identifying Wintergreens using leaf characteristics alone.

Michael Braithwaite, utilising his work on the Rare Plant Register and the Local Change project with the BSBI, has, by reference to thousands of historical records from Berwickshire, been able to identify the rate of loss in his home county of rare and scarce plants, from 1800 to the present day.

Undeniably, therefore, *British Wildlife* is a publication we all should read.

I seem to have seen a lot of birds attacking potential predators this last year. Crows definitely have a thing about Buzzards, and I've frequently seen the former attacking the latter. On one occasion I saw a Crow actually grab a Buzzard's tail. I doubt if Buzzards are much of a threat to Crows, though I suppose they might have a go at eggs or young – or maybe they're just competing for nest sites.

Lapwings are ground nesters and must be at risk from a whole range of birds prepared to take their eggs. Last year I saw both Crows and Black-headed Gulls being chased off a Lapwing field. Sometimes they take it to extremes, however. My parents once saw Lapwings dive-bombing a pair of bemused Partridges, who presumably offered no threat.

In July I saw Swallows apparently mobbing a Sparrowhawk near Yetholm, and in September a Kestrel attacking a Crow in Holyrood Park. Earlier in the year I saw a little Wren having a go at a Magpie which was presumably plundering its nest. It had even less chance of success than the Blackbird that nested just outside our main door. I used to say hallo to the bird just before I opened the door, but sadly the Magpies found that nest too.



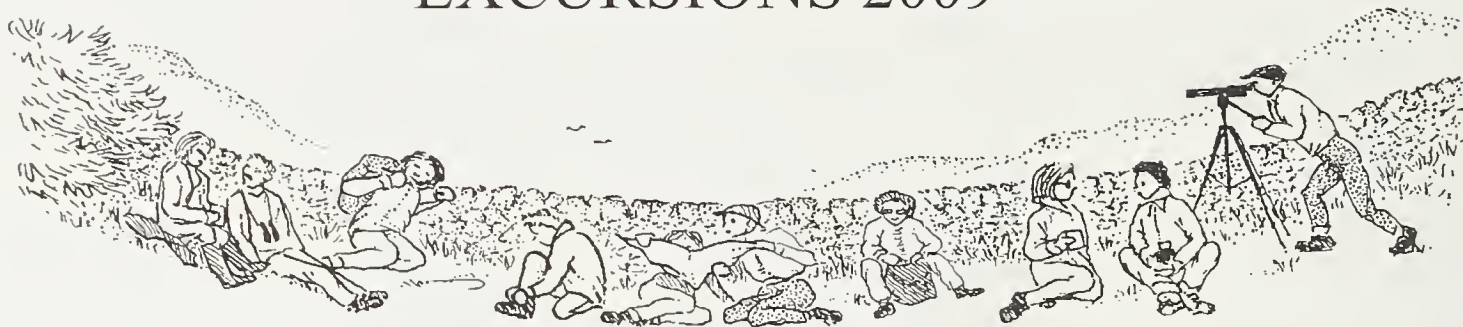
Lapwings

EXCURSIONS 2009

DATE	VENUE	LEADER
January		
17	Blackness	Jackie Muscott
February		
14	East Linton to Hailes Castle	Alison Ramsey
April		
18	John Muir Country Park	Neville Crowther
May		
2	Loch Leven Heritage Trail	Molly Woolgar
6	Seton area	Jackie Muscott
9	About Peebles	Eileen Perry
16	Roslin Glen, 'Dawn' chorus	Lesley Fairweather
20 Wednesday	Water of Leith	Grace Jamieson
23	Almondell Country Park	Lyn Blades
28 Thursday	Leighton Moss	Neville Crowther
30	Loch Lomond NNR	Joanie McNaughton
June		
3 Wednesday	Wester Shore Wood	David Adamson
8-12	Galloway -Newton Stewart	Neville Crowther
20	Fife coast-Dumbarnie Links	Gordon Corbet
24 Wednesday	Puffin Cruise	Grace Jamieson
27	Ben Vrackie	Roger Holme
July		
1 Wednesday	Longniddry Bents	Mary Tebble
4	Cockmuir-Toxside	Richard Buckland
8 Wednesday	Cammo estate	Douglas McKean
10-12	Montrose/ St Cyrus	Neville Crowther/Lyn Blades
18	Gladhouse circuit	Malcolm Lavery
25	Pentlands Two Cleuchs Walk	David Adamson
August		
1	Stobo circuit or to Broughton	Neville Crowther
8	Ballinluig island	Jackie Muscott
15	Pease Dean	Mary Clarkson
22	Crooked Loch Forest	Jeff Waddell
23	Carrifran (with BSS)	Roy Watling
29	The Clink	Neville Crowther
September		
5	Hartside Hill	Michael Braithwaite
12	Cloich circuit	David Adamson
16 Wednesday	Moth-trapping, Cammo	Neville Crowther / Roger Holmes
19	Penicuik Woods	Mike Richardson
October		
3	Binning Wood	Neville Kilkenny
10	Barns Ness/Torness	Tom Delaney
November		
14	Glentress	Jean Murray
December		
29	Musselburgh	Janet Watson



EXCURSIONS 2009



BLACKNESS

17th January

Jackie Muscott

There was quite a good turnout for the first meeting of the New Year, which took us from Blackness to Bo'ness along the shore. (Probably everyone was anxious to walk off the season's excesses.) As we set off there were numbers of birds out to sea, including Eider, Wigeon, Black-headed and Common Gulls, while inland was a busy Rookery.

Further along we paused to look at a Buzzard ensconced in a tree and to admire a clump of Snowdrops *Galanthus nivalis* in a patch of woodland. There were also a number of common fungi growing on dead wood, including Turkey Tails *Trametes versicolor*, the rather similar Hairy Stereum *Stereum hirsutum* and Jew's Ear *Auricularia auricula-judae*. Later we saw Wood Puffballs *Lycoperdon pyriforme* and a tiny, fan-like fungus *Arhhenia sp.* which grows on mosses.

On the front at Bo'ness we had a chance to examine the new concrete sea defences and some more seabirds – Shelduck, Redshank and Oystercatcher. There were also two more plants in flower – Sun Spurge *Euphorbia helioscopia*, on a pile of earth, and Grey Alder *Alnus incana*.

Some people turned back early and enjoyed a cup of tea in the kiosk at Blackness Castle. The castle was built to protect the harbour and in the 14th century belonged to the Douglas family. A century later it came into royal hands and was used as a state prison, many Covenanters being housed in the dungeons 'among the puddocks and the toads'. It was taken by Cromwell after the execution of Charles I, and his soldiers managed to blow a hole in it when some explosives went off. It is perhaps ironic that it was latterly used as a munitions depot!

Jackie Muscott

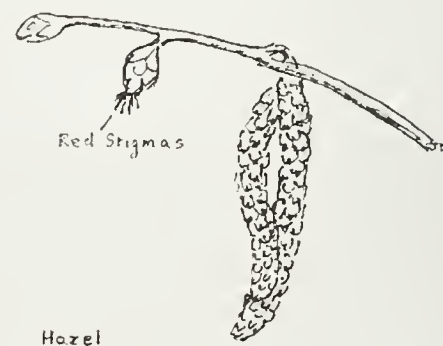
EAST LINTON TO HAILES CASTLE

14th February

Alison Ramsay

Twelve of us met at East Linton on a morning not quite as cold as the previous three weeks but still with a scattering of snow on the ground. There were however some signs of Spring as we set off westwards on the footpath by the River Tyne. Collared Doves were performing aerial displays over the village and Starlings were beginning to sing. Dense swathes of Snowdrop *Galanthus nivalis* covered much of the ground for the first mile but other herbs were as yet only in a vegetative state.

Lesser Celandine *Ranunculus ficaria*, Herb Robert *Geranium robertianum* and, more ominously, the highly invasive alien Few-flowered Leek *Allium paradoxum* were beginning to emerge in large numbers. A few Long-tailed Tits and a Roe buck entertained us for a few minutes before we slithered onwards. A couple of Mute Swans, both cobs, guzzled Water Crowfoot *Ranunculus aquatilis* agg mid stream



Some of the riverside Willows were just beginning to display their catkins and one or two had enormous bunches of the epiphytic fern Common Polypody *Polypodium vulgare* festooning the branches. Hazels appeared to have stalled in the development of their catkins, but we were able to find half a dozen buds topped by tiny scarlet stars, stigmas of female flowers destined to become nuts. Plants such as Hazel which have flowers of separate sexes on the same tree are given the name monoecious by botanists. Beyond the bridge carrying the new A1, a large area of recently

planted shrubs and small trees covered the banks. Prominent were Field Maples, not native to Scotland, but with attractive bark (and in a couple of months, pretty foliage). The Blackthorns showed no sign of flowering, even though they are usually one of the first to do so.

The Tyne was flowing fast with snow melt, and we did see two Dippers and a pair of Mallard, but other wildfowl didn't appear to find the river to their liking. Passerines were none too numerous either. By lunchtime we had crossed the footbridge to the ancient and ruinous Hailes Castle. Building was begun by the de Gourlay family in the 13th century but it became severely damaged in the 'rough wooing' and again by Cromwell after the Battle of Dunbar during the Third English Civil War. We found a dry and appropriate place for our lunch in the former kitchens in the basement. Crossing the river once more, we climbed the slope to Pencraig Hill, eventually discovering how to negotiate both the new and old A1.

With Alison to the fore we crossed the fields by Markle Quarry to enter the village by the back door, hopeful that after weeks of snow and ice this was the day of transition to spring.

Neville Crowther

JOHN MUIR COUNTRY PARK

18th April

Neville Crowther

The Park is named after John Muir, the explorer, naturalist and conservationist who was born in Dunbar in 1838. He lived here until the age of 11, when the Muir family emigrated to the United States, where they settled in Wisconsin. As an adult, his pioneering conservation work led to him being known as the founder of America's National Parks.

John Muir Country Park covers some of the most spectacular East Lothian coastline. From the Castle ruins in Dunbar, to the Peffer Burn six kilometres to the north, the Park includes a cliff-top trail, giving fine views out to sea with the Bass Rock and the Isle of May prominent; the long sandy sweep of Belhaven Bay with its surf beach; and the River Tyne estuary and its extensive grassland, salt-marsh and woodland. Our journey began at the car park by Seafield Pond on the eastern edge of the Biel Burn. Several of us knew the story of the neophyte Hoary Cress *Lepidium draba*, just coming into flower, which grows profusely on this shingle beach. It seems that it was brought from the island of Walcheren in the Low Countries in 1809 among the bedding of soldiers wounded in the battle there.

Eight of us assembled at the start point, delighted that the sun was beginning to dispel the clouds and haar

that had chilled us for the last few days. A dozen Swallows hawked overhead as we walked to Seafield Pond. The relatively new caravan park had destroyed the Willow & Alder carr which used to exist here, but the pond seemed reasonably intact, with its Mute Swans, Mallards, Tufties and Moorhens. The brightening day brought out our first Orange Tips of the year with Small Tortoiseshells and Green-veined Whites accompanying them. The estuary of the Biel Burn had small flocks of gulls splashing and preening in the fresh water, including both Greater and Lesser Black-backs distinguished best by their leg colour and size. A few more Mute Swans, Shelducks and a small party of Wigeon waded along.

Spring flowers, including White Deadnettle *Lamium alba*, Hedge Mustard *Sisymbrium officinale*, Sweet Cicely *Myrrhis odorata*, were noticeable, as were Pellitory of the Wall *Parietaria judaica* and, alongside the Biel Burn, near the footbridge, lots of Crow Garlic *Allium vineale* yet to flower. As soon as we had crossed the burn, and for the rest of the day, we were assailed by the song of Skylarks and the flights of Meadow Pipits. Scores of Linnets burst out of the stubble fields, twittering around in circuits before landing again. Goldfinches, flashing yellow and white wingbars, danced around in the Pine trees. Sea Wormwood *Seriphidium maritimum* decorated the stone walls and the upper salt marsh. We heard our first Chiffchaffs and even a Willow Warbler. A small pond, which a month before had been jammed with copulating amphibians and spawn was disappointingly quiet, with only a few tadpoles. Some Stonewort *Chara globularia* was a scarce primitive plant of some interest.

Walking along the edge of the Hedderwick plantation, our interest was maintained by the 'children's farm', with rare breeds of pig, sheep and goat. Rheas, Llamas, Red and Fallow Deer were also on display. Further along, on the edge of a field of winter wheat, the agricultural 'weeds' which had escaped the chemical barrage were a delight. Our list included Common Fumitory *Fumaria officinalis*, Field Pansy *Viola arvensis*, Thyme-leaved Sandwort *Arenaria serpyllifolia*, Henbit Deadnettle *Lamium amplexicaule*, Shepherd's Purse *Capsella bursa-pastoris*, Stork's bill *Erodium cicutarium*, Bugloss *Anchusa arvensis*, Lesser Chickweed *Stellaria pallida*, Field Mouse Ear *Cerastium arvense*, Spring Beauty *Claytonia perfoliata*.

Shelducks

Lunch was taken where the John Muir Trail that we had followed, meets the Tyne estuary. Lying down with the sun warming your body was an almost forgotten experience. Suddenly three other 'Nats' arrived from the other



direction, having mistaken the starting point that morning, and so we were eleven. We all watched squadrons of Shelduck strutting along the mud and Sand Martins wheeling overhead, while more Goldfinches twittered above us in the pines. Afterwards, we turned north and, finding an area of slacks, discovered flowering in the tightly cropped sward two diminutive species of well known families – Early Forget-me-not *Myosotis ramosissima* and Little Mouse-ear *Cerastium semidecandrum*. A little further on, bursting through the Marram Grass *Ammophila arenaria* of the dunes, were clumps of Lesser Meadow Rue *Thalictrum minus*. We zig-zagged across the salt marsh and the dune system a couple of times but found little diversity. We watched about 20 surfers enjoying themselves out in the bay, as strings of Gannets slipstreamed each other to and from their feeding grounds. We examined partially successful attempts by the Council to uproot the invasive shrub, Sea Buckthorn *Hippophae rhamnoides*. Jackie performed her good deed for the day by destroying one plant of Few-flowered leek *Allium paradoxum*, a far more sinister invader.

Celery-leaved Buttercup *Ranunculus sceleratus* growing in the salt marsh confused us all for a while as we made our way back. Jackie produced a remarkable dried fruiting stalk of *Cynoglossum officinale*, which made us realise how this dune plant got its English name – Hound's tongue. Most folk then headed for a cuppa before going home.

Neville Crowther

LOCH LEVEN HERITAGE TRAIL

2nd May

Molly Woolgar

In the Vane Farm car-park, I was puzzled by a tree, apparently in full leaf and bearing greenish-yellow foliage, while other trees were just beginning to come into leaf. Closer inspection revealed it to be an Elm, covered profusely with seed discs. Willow Warblers were singing, our first Swallows were overhead, and Molly had seen an early Swift *en route* at Cramond Brig. We were to see another later that day.

Last year, we had covered the northern side of the loch, a three-mile stretch from Kinross to Wester Balgedie. We now explored the second four-mile stage from Vane Farm to the Pow Burn. We turned right after the pedestrian underpass along the path between loch and road, with open views of the water. Here, Herons, Greylag Geese, Gadwall, Great-crested Grebe, Shelduck and Black-headed Gulls were seen. From the nearby woodland, the calls of many birds were heard: a woodpecker drummed, Chiff Chaff, Wren, Chaffinch, Goldfinch, Blue and Great Tits all contributed, while overhead a Buzzard mewed, and some were able to identify a Peregrine Falcon. We walked through an

avenue of Bird Cherry *Prunus padus* and Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, white with blossom, and Hawthorns *Crataegus monogyna* in bud. A charming pair of Long-tailed Tits delighted us all.

Coming to an open area with a good vista opposite St. Serf's Island, we found a plantation of young trees in protective tubes: they will eventually form a shelter-belt of native, berry-bearing species. At a second car-park and picnic site, we found a large sluice controlling the loch level, the outflow from which emerges as the Leven Cut and starts the River Leven. Crossing the Leven Bridge, the path wandered through open, mixed woodland of Birch and elderly Oaks with some Ash. The nearby slopes were golden with coconut-scented Gorse *Ulex europaeus*. Spring flowers included Wood Sorrel *Oxalis acetosella*, Wood Anemone *Anemone nemorosa*, Bluebells *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, Wood Violet *Viola riviniana*, Greater Stitchwort *Stellaria holostea*, with Lady's Smock *Cardamine pratensis*, Celandine *Ranunculus ficaria* and Marsh Marigold *Caltha*

palustris. In

the wetter

areas. Spring

Sedge *Carex*

caryophylla,

Butterwort

Pinguicula

vulgaris and

Lousewort

Pedicularis

sylvatica were also found. The list went on.



Marsh Marigold

By this time, as Molly had predicted, members had split into many groups. My group looked for Holy Grass *Hierochloa odorata*, so memorable a year ago but now not to be found. There were Orange Tip and Green-Veined White butterflies. The trail is very pleasing at this point, though it can be wet underfoot. Soon it was time to return by the same route, and we all reunited for refreshment in the RSPB tea-room. It had been an agreeable day on new territory and well worth a return visit.

Mary Robertson

SETON AREA

6th May

Jackie Muscott

I managed to break my wrist just over a week before I was due to lead the evening outing from Port Seton. I had to go to the Royal Infirmary for a check-up that afternoon and had such a long wait that I began to wonder if I'd make it in time. I could not drive and must thank Betty Mitchelhill for getting me there and back again. The weather was gloomy, and the turnout correspondingly small. Not a propitious start, though those who turned up said they enjoyed the walk.

Starting from the attractive little harbour at Port Seton, we walked along the front to the end of the houses and

the start of a thinly-wooded track towards Seton House. There was a good deal of Garlic Mustard *Alliaria petiolata* at the start of the track, and on a sunny evening we would have hoped to see Orange Tip butterflies, which lay their eggs on the plant. Not this evening however.

We were soon rewarded with very good views of Seton House, before the track turned towards Seton Farm and then via a minor road to the A198, where there's a wide verge with some attractive roadside plants. We returned through the woods by Seton Chapel, closed at this time of night, but an interesting place to visit.



A glimpse of Seton House

The chapel would originally have had a small complement of priests whose duty was to say mass for the soul of the founder. Incidentally there's a rare plant on the lawns – Slender Trefoil *Trifolium micranthum*, similar to, but even smaller than Lesser Trefoil *T. dubium*.

It was a rather damp walk back along the coast road at the west end of Seton Sands – a good place for bird-watching on an incoming tide in the winter. Then it was fish and chips for some of the party who had foregone their supper, and a wet drive home.

Jackie Muscott & Mary Clarkson

ABOUT PEEBLES - EILEEN'S WALK

9th May

Lyn Blades & Sandra Stewart

It did not occur to me that a short walk very close to Peebles could take me somewhere I did not know – but so it turned out, and a very varied route it proved to be. We started with a delightful riverside walk in sunshine with good views of Goosanders, Mallards, a Dipper and a Heron. Willow Warblers gave us their distinctive descending trill from nearby trees while a Wren scolded loudly as we passed by.

An old wall was decorated with Wall-rue *Asplenium ruta-muraria*, and Maidenhair Spleenwort *Asplenium trichomanes*, as well as Ivy-leaved Toadflax *Cymbalaria muralis*. We skirted the grounds of Peebles Hydro en route to our main objective, the Soonhope

Valley, which leads north into hilly country. The path upwards ran beside a burn fringed with pretty spring flowers: Primrose *Primula vulgaris*, Marsh Marigold *Caltha palustris*, Cuckoo flower *Cardamine pratensis*, Opposite-leaved Golden Saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*,

Monkeyflower *Mimulus guttatus* agg and Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*. Weekend huts lay below the path, and one of the weekenders amused us with tales of how some of the huts (in reality old railway carriages) were dragged into position by Clydesdale horses.



Dipper

Lunch proved to be an entertaining interlude, as our lunch spot was a checkpoint for orienteers on bicycles who seemed to approach from all directions! We set off downhill in somewhat less idyllic conditions, as it had started to rain, and we reached the Hydro in a downpour. However, tea with Eileen Perry at 'Kilcreggan' cheered and warmed us, and the weather cleared for our second riverside walk, with Swallows and Martins flying low over the water.

Mary Clarkson

ROSLIN DAWN CHORUS

16th May

Lesley Fairweather

With three cold fronts passing through on Friday evening, it was not surprising that at 9 a.m. on Saturday morning there were only eight intrepid birders gathered at Roslin Glen car-park. Luck was on our side, and the morning was clear. The bridge provided a stand point to watch a Dipper feeding young, along with a pair of Grey Wagtails, before the group set off up the Glen, mercifully still free of cars.



Blackcap

Blue Tits were seen nesting in an Ash tree close to noisy Jackdaws feeding young. Sue Crowther cleverly pointed out a Spotted Flycatcher, first of the season for most of the group, and the same eagle eyes came up with a Long-tailed Tit's nest high up in a branch of a Scots Pine. This was an excellent record for the Common Bird Census still being recorded each year in the Scottish Wildlife Trust's Reserve in Roslin Glen.

Blackcap and Garden Warbler caused the usual controversy, with "de di de da" not always coming through loud and clear in the Blackcap song.

Walking up through the triangle area towards the old railway, we found plenty of singing birds, and the return through the bluebell wood rewarded some of the group with a Nuthatch call, a pair of calling Buzzards, and yet another Song Thrush. The latter certainly kept up the bird-song volume until midday, when quietness descended and the walk ended.

Lesley Fairweather

WATER OF LEITH

20th May

Grace Jamieson

Mary Clarkson had just put a dressing on her lawn, and was hoping for a shower to water it in, which looked not unlikely as we drove to the Water of Leith Centre, the venue for our Wednesday evening walk. However it was still dry when about a dozen Nats set off down river, and then up the steps to the Union Canal.

En route we passed a good deal of Honesty *Lunaria annua*, which is actually a biennial, despite its Latin name. Also Osiers *Salix viminalis* and the odd Butterfly Bush *Buddleja davidii*. On the canal towpath, Buttercups *Ranunculus spp.* and Red Clover *Trifolium pratense* were in flower, while the Ivy *Hedera helix* was still heavy with black berries. The Reed Sweet Grass *Glyceria maxima* which lines the canal was infected by its usual smut *Ustilago longissima* which forms black stripes down the leaves.

We passed over the spectacular viaduct, always a bit exciting when you meet a cyclist coming the other way, where Oxford Ragwort *Senecio squalidus* was growing happily among the nooks and crannies. And then we were crossing the footbridge into Craiglockhart Dell. It was interesting to note that there

Wasp *Neuroterus quercusbaccarum*, which lays its eggs on the male flowers, or sometimes on the leaves. The offspring of this wasp lay their eggs on the underside of the leaves in the autumn, producing a completely different gall – the Common Spangle. In late summer you sometimes find both types of gall on the leaves and so there’s clearly an overlap of generations.



Swift

Swallow

House Martin

We passed along beside the allotments and the old walled garden where Yellow Corydalis *Pseudofumaria lutea* decorates the walls, and then over the Water of Leith into the Dell proper. Here were native woodland plants, including some uncommon ones – Wood Speedwell *Veronica montana*, Goldilocks Buttercup *Ranunculus auricomus* and Sanicle *Sanicula europaea* – and introductions like the two Leopardsbanes *Doronicum pardalianches* and *D. plantagineum*. here were Hart’s Tongue *Phyllitis scolopendrium* and Hard Shield Fern *Polystichum aculeatum* by the little stream which runs past the summerhouse, and St George’s Mushroom *Tricholoma gambosum*, rather past its best, by the path. But now we were leaving the shelter of the woods and it was pouring with rain. It did not deter the Song Thrush serenading us from a near by treetop, but we were soon making a dash for our cars.

Good for Mary’s lawn though!

Jackie Muscott



Currant and Common Spangle Galls on Oak

were Bird Cherries *Prunus padus* on both sides of the bridge, and that the one on the shady side was in full bloom while that on the sunny side was going over. Hawthorns *Crataegus monogyna* provided a mass of white along the path beyond.

An overhanging Oak *Quercus robur* had currant galls among the catkins. These are caused by a little Gall

ALMONDELL AND CALDER WOOD

23rd May

Lyn Blades

On 23rd May, a dozen or so Nats met at the north car park for a spring walk by the Almond. We set off through the woods en route for the Visitor Centre and were delighted to stumble on a stand of the elegant grass Wood Millet *Milium effusum*. We also passed some Bird Cherries *Prunus padus* with silken ‘tents’ containing the larvae of the Cherry Ermine Moth. The moth seems to have had a good year: in July we saw Bird Cherries at Feshiebridge completely stripped by the caterpillars.

Once on the track we became aware of Wood Aven *Geum urbanum*, Water Aven *G. rivale* and, surprisingly common, the hybrid between them *Geum x intermedium*. In the woodland were Ramsons *Allium ursinum*, Pignut *Conopodium majus*, Wood Speedwell *Veronica montana*, Leopardbane *Doronicum pardalianches*, assorted ferns and a lovely patch of Meadow Saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata*. Nearer the Visitor Centre there were several introduced plants – Green Alkanet *Pentaglottis sempervirens*, Russian Comfrey *Symphytum x uplandicum* and the doubtfully native Tuberous Comfrey *S. tuberosum*. We passed a Walnut Tree *Juglans regia* in full flower and with galls caused by a mite *Aceria erinea*. The infected leaves have bulges on the upper side with a felty depression below.

Daffodils had been planted in front of the Visitor Centre, so the lawn had not been mowed, allowing four different sorts of Buttercup to flourish: Creeping *Ranunculus repens*, Meadow *R. acris*, Bulbous *R. bulbosus*, generally found in unimproved grassland, and Goldilocks *R. auricomus* usually found in woodland. There was also a splendid display of Azaleas and Rhododendrons, some suffering from Bud Blast *Pycnostyscinus azaleae*, a fungus which causes buds to blacken and stop developing. A lone Small Tortoiseshell butterfly was seen near here, while Swifts, Swallows and Martins were all wheeling about, and Buzzards soaring above. Just before crossing the river we came upon some bushes of Mountain Currant *Ribes alpinum*, which is not uncommon in some of the old estates.

Unlike most currants, *Ribes alpinum* is dioecious, and male plants tend to be more popular as the flowers are more attractive, but of course they bear no fruit, and we were pleased to see berries on some of the bushes.

From the bridge we saw Mallards and Pied and Grey Wagtails, while further up river by the weir we were able to watch a Heron fishing (he was still there on the way back). There was also a Dipper, tucked away close to the bank. And by the path was a stand of another introduced plant, Giant Valerian *Valeriana pyrenaica* which has large heart-shaped leaves.

Soon we reached Mid Calder where our recce had ended in pouring rain (we had eaten our sandwiches glumly in a bus shelter). Today however we were able to enjoy a walk in Calder Wood, where there were drifts of Bluebells *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, interspersed with the white of Greater Stitchwort *Stellaria holostea* and the yellow of Tormentil *Potentilla erecta*. One of the Oak trees sported several galls: Currant Galls caused by the wasp *Neuroterus quercusbaccarum* among the catkins, and the large, soft Oak Apple galls caused by another wasp *Biorhiza pallida*, on the twigs.

Throughout the day we were accompanied by a good deal of bird song, from both resident species such as Blackbird and Song Thrush, and migrants such as Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff (if you can call the latter singing). During our picnic lunch we were serenaded by a Blackcap, which has a particularly sweet song, but who knows whether it was a migrant, or had spent the winter feeding off British bird tables.

The weather was looking ominous when we got back to the Visitor Centre, but there was time enough for a cup of tea or an ice cream before heading back to the car park. It started to rain as we drove away, but by then we had had a most enjoyable day out.

Jackie Muscott

LEIGHTON MOSS

28th May

Neville Crowther

At an early hour, twelve of us boarded the train at Waverley and enjoyed a scenic journey through the Southern Uplands and the fringes of Lakeland, changing trains at Lancaster for the short hop to Silverdale.

Although the weather was cloudy, with a blustery wind at times, we barely noticed as there was so much to see. Birds of course, predominated, and with several participants having high levels of bird-identification skill, we ended with a creditable list of about 70 species. Bitterns were booming, and Avocets were already at nests on the saline pools. Hundreds of mid-migration Black-tailed Godwits gave splashes of colour in flight and feeding. A Little Egret near the Eric Morecambe hide showed how far this species has moved northwards recently. Other birds rare for this reserve were Sandwich Tern and two Little Gulls.



The Ash-Yew woods on the limestone pavement resounded with bird song: Green Woodpeckers were 'yaffling' and visible; many warblers of several species were quite vocal; and there were residents rare to us, such as Marsh Tit.

A good collection of calcicole herbs on the limestone grassland included several species not common at home, such as Salad Burnet *Sanguisorba minor*, Small Toadflax *Chaenorhinum minus*, Field Madder *Sherardia arvensis*, and Shining Cranesbill. *Geranium lucidum*.

The afternoon was spent in the reed-beds. Scratching Sedge Warblers were everywhere and we even saw Bearded Reedlings - aka 'flying teaspoons'. Also present were of course, most of the common waterfowl such as Teal, Wigeon, Mallard, Gadwall, Shoveler, Tufted Duck, Coot, Moorhen, Dabchick and a large, noisy colony of nesting Black Headed Gulls, plus several Grey Herons. We had spectacular



Bearded Reedling

views of several quartering

Marsh Harriers both male and female. An unusual and pretty moth, the Small China-mark *Cataglyphis lemnae* was seen in the reeds. Lots of other notable invertebrates need a mention, especially spiders and beetles, including Cardinal Beetle *Pyrochroa coccinea* and Click Beetle *Anthonis haemorrhoidalis*, an Orb Spider *Laminioides cornutus*, powdery green Nettle Weevil, *Phyllobius pomaceus*, long, slim Reed bed Spider *Tetragnatha extensa* and a Nursery spider *Pisaura mirabilis*.

Once aboard the train, most of us dozed contentedly. The journey back to Edinburgh took a little over two hours, arriving around 9.30pm.

Neville Crowther

LOCH LOMOND NNR

30th May

Joanie McNaughton

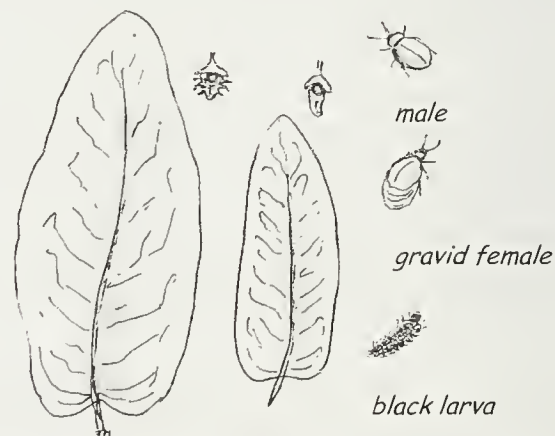
Well, what a cracking day! I think I'll stick to leading excursions on the last Saturday of May. As happened last year, we were blessed with sunshine, the first for some months. Tim Jacobs, an SNH Reserve Manager, very kindly gave up his Saturday to take us round. We met at the Millennium Hall Car Park in Gartocharn where Tim introduced himself and told us a bit about the Reserve. Before we even started walking, the first excitement of day flew past - a Painted Lady. Butterfly Conservation had only just put out a request for all Painted Lady sightings to be recorded. Thousands of them had been seen crossing the Channel and were swiftly moving north. Would they spread over the whole country - Shetland to Land's End? They did!

We set off along the Aber Path, across the Aber Burn, heading north towards Loch Lomond. The path, an ancient right of way, took us through fenced enclosures, once open fields. There aren't many places left where such a well preserved enclosure landscape can be seen. Between Gartocharn and the Reserve boundary, on the ground, we found Whorled Caraway *Carum verticillatum*, Fringe Cups *Tellima grandiflora*, Sanicle *Sanicula europaea*, Three-veined Sandwort

Moehringia trinervia, Blinks *Montia fontana*, Bog Stitchwort *Stellaria uliginosa*, Lady Fern *Athyrium filix-femina*, Dog Lichen *Peltigera sp*, Solomon's Seal *Polygonatum multiflorum*, Foxglove *Digitalis purpurea* which was rather oddly growing out of the top of a fence post, Pink Purslane *Claytonia sibirica*, among others. And of the feathered variety we had Swift, Swallow, Buzzard, Crow, Jackdaw, Willow Warbler, Wren, Chaffinch, Canada Goose, Siskin, Greenfinch, Great Tit, Blackbird, Rook, Starling.

On arriving at the Reserve itself, we took the path through Shore Wood. Tim explained the geology and how Loch Lomond was formed, the readvancement of the ice, pointing out a raised beach along the path and the volcanic plug, Duncryne Hill, known locally as The Dumpling. The land was a common in 1800, owned by the Montrose family, when it was bought by the Buchanans. Oak trees were first recorded in the area in 1864, and from 1820-1864 pyroligneous acid (wood vinegar) and tar were extracted from the Oak and processed at Balmaha.

The path through Shore Wood gave us loads more of botanical interest. We saw the Scottish Dock *Rumex aquaticus*, rare in Britain, this being one of the few locations where it occurs in Scotland; Globe Flower *Trollius europaeus*, Wood Stitchwort *Stellaria nemorum*; Large Bittercress *Cardamine amara* and Wood Melick *Melicia uniflora*; also both Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius* and Wood Dock *R. sanguineus*, allowing comparison of the two. One disappointment was that SNH had dug up from the Shore Wood all the American Skunk Cabbage *Lysichiton americanus*, which was, if nothing else, a spectacular and colourful curiosity.



Leaves & seeds of Broad-leaved Dock & Wood Dock, along with Green Dock Leaf Beetles, These beetles and their larvae can swiftly reduce a Dock leaf to cobwebs

Within this section of the Reserve, a change in stock use took place four years ago, with water barrels being put in, to encourage stock away from the water's edge and trampling the vegetation. In the Oak woods were Blackcap, Robin and Wren. We reached a grassy area on the loch shore, Net Bay, where we had lunch. Birds seen were Shelduck, Mallard, Goosander, Red-breasted

Merganser, Goldeneye, and an Osprey; and from the insect world, there were looper caterpillars and a Green Dock Leaf Beetle *Gastrophysa viridula*.

After lunch we moved away from the loch, walking up over the raised beach and across open grassy fields, past the Endrick Viewpoint, which looks down over a large wetland breeding area for many birds. We headed towards the Endrick Water, meandering slowly to Loch Lomond. Here we found Tree Pipit, Meadow Pipit and Reed Bunting and a constant stream of Painted Ladies and a few Orange Tips. We proceeded to the lowland area known as Twenty Acres, which is one of Central Scotland's most plant-rich wet meadows and was once used for hay-making. Here in the Willows along the banks of the Endrick were many Sedge Warblers, a Snipe, going chippa chippa, and Oystercatchers overhead.

At the Aber Burn, Tim explained the history of the area's management. During the 1930s-50s no management took place, and the area became completely overgrown. In the 60s-90s, the wardens introduced a grazing plan: the hay meadows were cut and grazed; a Ross drain was punched through, which was awarded Drainage Cup of the Year; and a series of bunds were put in place along the burn, with stands of Reed Canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea*. Along the burn and on the raised bog we found Elongated or Ginger Sedge *Carex elongata*, Cowbane *Cicuta virosa*, Tufted Loosestrife *Lysimachia thyrsiflora* and Yellow Water-lily *Nuphar lutea*. Of insects, we saw a Garden Tiger caterpillar (or 'Woolly Bear') and a Silver Ground Carpet. And still more Painted Ladies.

All in all, a superb day and many thanks to Tim Jacobs for taking us round the Reserve and telling us so much about it and SNH's work there.

Joanie McNaughton

WESTER SHORE WOOD

3rd June

David Adamson

Alexander Dumas wrote a novel, *Twenty Years After* about the later life of the Three Musketeers. If the outing to Wester Shore Wood were to have a title, *Twenty Years (and Three Days) After* might be appropriate, as it was on the evening of 31st May 1989 that the Society visited Blackness. I have little recollection of that visit, but my old notebook lists the plants found on that occasion, and I compared this with the plants seen in 2009. Changes between 1989 and 2009 may signify nothing more than the fact that the Society covered slightly different ground on the two visits, but it was a pleasure to find some plants not listed in 1989, and to enjoy the deep purple (another

1970's rock band) spikes of Northern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza purpurella* in a damp area set back from the shore.

The habitats visited were freshwater marsh, salt marsh, rough grassland, and predominantly deciduous plantation woodland. There was little overlap in the plant life of each habitat: plants found in the tiny areas of saltmarsh did not intrude into the freshwater marsh; the Bulbous Buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus* grew only in rough grassland; the Northern Marsh Orchid did not venture beyond the freshwater marsh.

We looked at an incised stone in the sea wall on the approach to Blackness Castle. A date from the 1790s had been deeply cut into the hard rock, and the initials had been traced by the Castle curator to an army surgeon or doctor stationed at Blackness at a time of threatened French invasion. Whether he was demoted for blunting an army knife is not recorded.

As we left the shelter of the ridge linking the village of Blackness to its castle, we felt the east wind more keenly, and it was pleasant to reach the sanctuary of Wester Shore Wood. Apart from the fact that this is part of the Hopetoun Estates and, from a plaque found on an earlier visit, was probably planted in 1934, I had been unable to find out any facts about the wood. It covers the seaward slope from the Midhope Burn in the east to the small burn near Blackness village in the west. In shape it is a long, narrow rectangle, and the main footpath hugs the coastline. A higher path runs along the southern edge, and we made for this soon after entering the wood. There are occasional massive stumps of long dead trees, perhaps evidence of an older wood on the site. The present wood has distinct areas, each dominated by one species of tree. The most westerly block is dominated by Oak, and the middle block, particularly away from the sea winds, is mainly of Beech. Ash trees are common, but whether deliberately planted or an invasive weed species is not obvious.

In the wood we saw Buzzards and heard a Great Spotted Woodpecker. The ground flora is unspectacular, perhaps what would be expected after 75 years of undisturbed woodland cover. Sanicle *Sanicula europaea* was in flower, and we spent some time in poor light unsuccessfully trying to distinguish the black spot at the margin of leaflet and rachis that would distinguish Common Male Fern *Dryopteris filix-mas* from its scaly relative *D. affinis*. The leaves of some gooseberry or currant bushes had been stripped to skeletons by caterpillars, possibly of Magpie Moth.

After our ramble in the western half of the wood, we skirted the shore as we returned to Blackness in fading light. It will take a miracle of medical science to allow all ten present to return to Blackness in 2029, but I hope that some of those present on this occasion will be fit and able to do so.

David Adamson

DUMBARNIE LINKS

20th June

Gordon Corbet

We had all enjoyed Gordon Corbet's talk in Edinburgh the previous winter and so were delighted that we were now to see his reserve for ourselves. Fourteen of us assembled at Lower Largo for the short walk to the reserve, along the former railway line. This access is part of the Fife Coastal Path. The reserve is owned by SWT and is a 7-hectare part of the larger Dumbarnie Links SSSI. As Convenor, Gordon monitors populations of most plant and animal groups annually, including many orders of insects, where his allegiances seem now to be strongest.

The weather soon became sunny and warm as we enjoyed the approach walk. In prime condition were stands of Greater Knapweed *Centaurea scabiosa*, at one of its few Scottish sites. Linnets and other finches along with warblers such as Blackcap and Whitethroat were in song among the Brambles, Hawthorns and Elders bounding the railway.



Greater Knapweed

The Japanese Rose *Rosa rugosa* is well naturalised here, forming large thickets behind the beach.

Crossing the reserve boundary, we walked along the beach where waders scurried away. Close to the shore, Eiders and gulls foraged around small reefs as we examined the narrow band of fore-dune vegetation dominated by Lime Grass *Leymus arenarius* and Marram *Ammophila arenaria*. The lime-rich dune grasslands form an important habitat for a number of rare plants and invertebrates. This botanically rich habitat had Cowslips *Primula veris*, Purple Milk-vetch *Astragalus danicus*, Meadow Cranesbill *Geranium pratense*, Viper's Bugloss *Echium vulgare*, Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum* and other calcicoles. Butterflies such as Ringlet, Meadow Brown and Small Copper were notably frequent. We diligently searched the violets in these dunes for Dark Green Fritillary caterpillars but were unsuccessful. However, among the vast diversity of invertebrates, many interesting insects were discovered. A larva of the Devil's Coachhorse was an unusual sight, squirming beneath the grass roots to escape our attention. Seven-spot Ladybird *Coccinella*

septempunctata larvae were abundant on the ruderal vegetation, seeking aphids. Yellow Meadow Ants *Lasius flavus* form frequent colonies in the sandy soil, largely hidden by grasses. They groom the Common Blue butterfly larvae for honeydew, and one was seen on the way back.

The reserve also bears interesting reflections of the past: the eastern end is bounded by pill-boxes and a line of concrete blocks, built to defend against German landings 60 years ago. Also, the coastal railway line, on which we walked back, was decommissioned in 1965 as part of Dr. Beeching's ruthless pruning of the national network for the Government of the day.

Neville Crowther

RSPB SEABIRD 'PUFFIN CRUISE'

24th June

Grace Jamieson

On a dull summer's evening, seven Nats joined the RSPB Seabird 'Puffin Cruise' on the *Maid of the Forth*. As the boat set off from Hawes Pier, full to capacity, it sailed through a grey mist, with the prospect of worse to come. Our first halt was alongside Inchgarvie Island, where we had close views of many Guillemots, Eiders and Fulmars. Sailing on to the other islands, the air got decidedly colder, and the sea choppy. The weather luckily did not deter the Common Seals, which were popping their heads above the waves, or the Grey Seals, sprawled on buoys and rocky skerries. All around in the open water Puffins, Guillemots and Razorbills delighted us. On the islands of Haystack and Car Craig, we saw nesting Cormorants, Shags and gulls, including many youngsters. In the distance, strings of Gannets were passing on their way to and from the Bass Rock.

At Inchcolm, we were given an account over the ship's loudspeaker of the island's history. The well preserved monastic buildings would perhaps lure many back on the summertime tours.

The sail to Inchkeith, the most exposed and distant island, was unfortunately abandoned, as the sea condition had deteriorated. We then cruised to Inchmickery, where, for 20 minutes or so, we watched the breeding population of Shags and gulls. Their chicks peered incongruously from the shattered doors and windows of the island's many ruined military buildings, reminders of its role as a gun-emplacement to defend the railway bridge during the Second World War.

In compensation for the shortened voyage, an impromptu trip under the two bridges delighted everyone on board. As we sailed into Port Edgar we saw wading birds and terns on the breakwaters before ending a chilly evening back at the pier.

Grace Jamieson



Approaching Dumbarnie Links



On Way to Loch Lomond Nature Reserve



Glassery Picnic



Luce Bay Shingle Beach



Attentive Students



Loch Trool Viewpoint



Primula scotica



Clustered Bellflower



Stonefly



Greater Knapweed



Purple Oxytropis



Goldfinch



Avocets



Large Heath



Four-Spotted Chaser



Argent & Sable



Dark Green Fritillary



Large Bog Hoverfly



Silver Y



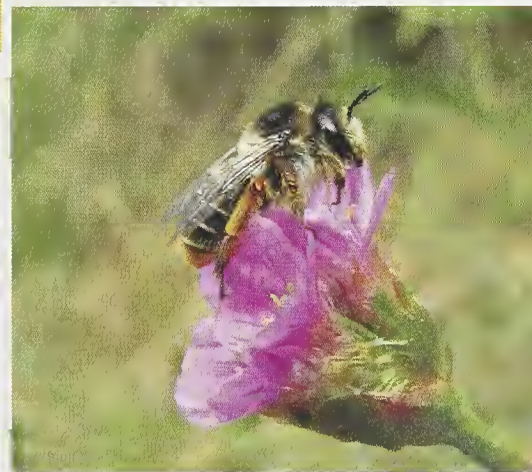
Cardinal Beetle



Mullein Moth Caterpillar



Click Beetle



Leaf-cutter Bee



Robin's Pincushion



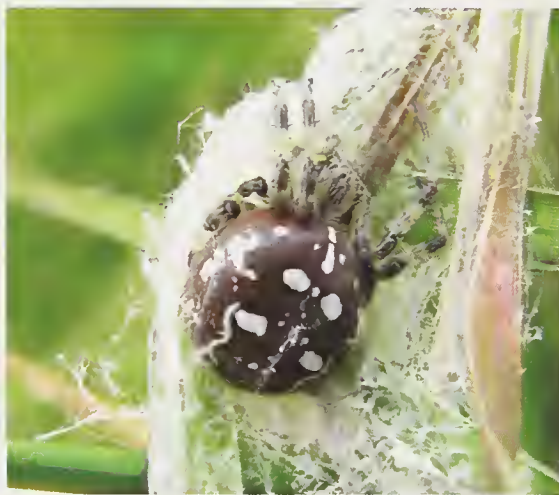
Knopper Gall



Clavulina cristata



'President Overacts'
Large Cep at Cloich Hills



Araneus quadratus in nest



Quail



Psilocybe on dung



Sunset over Aberlady

BEN VRACKIE

27th June

Roger Holme

A party of eight Nats browsed their way uphill from Moulin and soon found themselves in good company, as several other Botanical parties were on the hill that day. The hill in question was Ben Vrackie, noted for its easy access to interesting base-rich alpine habitat, with several nationally rare species of vascular plant.

The first stop of great interest was a base-rich flush containing many interesting species. The most notable was Brown Bog Rush *Schoenus ferrugineus*. This species is believed to have been transplanted here from a single locality near Loch Tummel when that site came under threat. In the same flush, many other interesting and less common species were noted, with a good count of *Carex* species and much Scottish Asphodel *Tofieldia pusilla*. During a long lunch stop by Loch a Choire, members mingled with well kent folk from some of the other groups. A 'silver ghost' - a male Hen Harrier - was spotted quartering the moorland, remaining in view for about five minutes. We also identified several Golden-ringed Dragonflies unremarkably associated with mountain torrents. After lunch, Roger made a swift ascent to the summit of Ben Vrackie, returning with an interesting leaf of Dwarf Willow *Salix herbacea* carrying its own rust *Rhytisma salicinum*.

Most of the members made their way up to the main area of crags. The population of the nationally scarce calcicole Alpine Milk Vetch *Astragalus alpinus* was in good flower. Treading carefully in this exceptional but delicate habitat, we found good numbers of Moonwort *Botrychium lunaria*, Alpine Mouse-ear *Cerastium alpinum*, Hoary Whitlow Grass *Draba incana* and many other species. High in the crags Purple Oxytropis *Oxytropis halleri* was still just holding a few flowering heads, much appreciated by the keen photographers in the party. This nationally rare species can be found not only on a few alpine sites but also at sea level, particularly on the north coast.

During the return, several of the party were shown an interesting clubmoss found under heather by a group from Kindrogan. Subsequent examination by RBGE confirmed this to be the very rare Issler's Clubmoss *Diphasiastrum complanatum*. This is a new Vice County record for Perthshire.

Near the car-park, Janet rounded off the day by spotting a Red Squirrel.

Roger Holme

Footnote The original site for Brown Bog Rush was lost when the water level of Loch Tummel was raised. The Ben Vrackie plant was transferred unofficially by Brian Brooks, the first warden of the Kindrogan Field Centre. The official transplants were all unsuccessful – but a good population has since been found elsewhere.

Jackie Muscott

LONGNIDDRY BENTS

1st July

Jackie Muscott

A good turnout of ENHS members met at Longniddry Bents on the first day of July. Mary Tebble, who was due to lead the walk was unfortunately unable to do so, and Jackie Muscott stepped into the breach.

The sun was shining, and a number of butterflies were on the wing – Ringlets, Meadow Browns, a Small Heath and a Painted Lady, along with a mating pair of Six-spot Burnet Moths and a Silver Y.

There were Cinnabar Moth caterpillars munching away at the Ragwort *Senecio jacobaea*. Ragwort is poisonous (particularly to horses) but the Cinnabar caterpillars happily consume it, becoming poisonous in turn. Their distinctive colouration (black and yellow stripes like a wasp) is a warning to would-be predators. Seven-spot Ladybirds are brightly coloured for similar reasons (they're unpleasant to eat), and we saw a good many of them too, along with larvae and pupae, and plenty of Blackfly for them to eat.



Seven-spot Ladybirds, larva and chrysalid

One of the special plants of the area, Clustered Bellflower *Campanula glomerata* was just coming into flower, while Bloody Cranesbill *Geranium sanguineum* seems to be spreading. Other plants of calcareous grassland included Cowslip *Primula veris* in seed, Rough Hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus*, Rest Harrow *Ononis repens*, the delicate Yellow Oatgrass *Trisetum flavescens* and Meadow Cranesbill *Geranium pratense*, closer to the shore.

Proceeding northeast through a patch of woodland and Sea Buckthorn *Hippophae rhamnoides*, the path emerges above a sea-wall. This area is sprayed with sea-water at high tide, and is effectively a saltmarsh with appropriate plants – Sea Milkwort *Glaux maritima*, Scurvy Grass *Cochlearia officinalis*, Annual Seablite *Suaeda maritima* and Saltmarsh Rush *Juncus gerardii*, all growing above the wall. In bare sand below were plants of Sea Rocket *Cakile maritima*.

There were one or two soil dumps with interesting ruderal plants, including Lesser Swinecress *Coronopus didymus*, Annual Nettle *Urtica urens* and Hoary Cress *Lepidium draba*. On barish ground, the handsome Musk Thistle *Carduus nutans* continues to do well, while the Watted Thistle *C. crispus* and the Slender or Sea Thistle *C. tenuiflorus* were both around. Altogether a good evening out.

Jackie Muscott

COCKMUIR/TOXSIDE

4th July

Richard Buckland, Butterfly Conservation
Scotland

This excursion was a rerun of a failed attempt at the same time last year, which was abandoned because of torrential rain. So it was a relief to Richard and me that the weather was sunny and warm. Sixteen aspirant lepidopterists arrived to start the walk at Cockmuir, south of Mount Lothian. After juggling cars around to avoid obstructing the road, we crossed the stile onto a forestry track.. The undulating landscape through which we walked had a mixture of exotic coniferous plantation and herb-rich dry grassland on the hummocks and peat-bog/wet heath in the hollows. Drainage is northwards via the infant Fullerton Water which flows through the Moss towards Edgelaw reservoir and then to the South Esk.

Within a few hundred yards it became obvious that, on the day, Ringlets would be numbered in their hundreds and Small Heaths not far behind. Fritillaries are never common in the Lothians, so we took delight in the frequent appearance of Small Pearl Bordered and Dark Green Fritillaries throughout the grassland. Another Nymphalid, the Meadow Brown, was also present in good numbers, as were Common Blues and some day-flying moths such as Six-spot Burnet, Heath and Yellowshell.

One of the main target species for Richard was, of course, the rare Large Heath. The first objective was the larval food plant – cotton grasses. Once found, in the bogs and wet heath, it was only a matter of time, we hoped, before they would be seen. After a lot of tramping in the hot sun, two colonies were discovered on Toxside Moss, numbering seven individuals. There was a flurry of shutter-clicking.



Ringlet

Cranberry

By the time we totted up, our total of all butterflies seen for the day, were to exceed 1000 of 13 species. It was too, a good time for flowers, other insects and birds. The insects on the flowers of Water Crowfoot *Ranunculus aquatilis* agg on the Fullerton Water seemed attractive to several Odonata such as Common Blue and Large Red Damsels. One rather early

Common Hawker was also seen patrolling the burn. As a bonus, during our search for the Large Heath, we had found several stands of Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum* and of Cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccos palustris*.

We also saw family parties of Whinchat, Redpoll, Wheatear, Grasshopper Warbler and Sedge Warbler. In their eagerness to feed their newly fledged young, we were able to observe closely these unusual passerines .

As a finale, several people walked along the Cockmuir verge admiring the variety of orchids and sedges and still seeing lots of lepidoptera. It was a fitting end to a fine day.

Neville Crowther

CAMMO ESTATE

8th July

Douglas McKean

About 15 members turned up for this evening excursion. Thanks to Jackie Muscott, the scribe for the evening, an interesting list of species was recorded. Starting with the smaller groups: a mop-headed gall caused by the fly *Chirosia betuleti* on Broad Buckler-Fern *Dryopteris dilatata*, and the Green Docken Beetle, *Gastrophysa viridula* whose larvae made the Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius* look like lace. Two smuts were also in evidence, one (*Ustilago violacea*) on Lesser Stitchwort *Stellaria graminea* and the other (*U. avenae*) on False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* . Ergots were also seen on this. Lastly on a broad- leaved tree was Ganoderma or Artist's Fungus. A few birds were also recorded: Song Thrush, Blackbird, Wren, Chiffchaff, Wood Pigeon, Blue, Great and Coal Tits, a family of Green Woodpeckers and Spotted Flycatcher, heard but not seen. About 120 plant species were found, with quite a few unusual ones such as a single Broad-leaved Helleborine *Epipactis helleborine* by the path close to a road. A beautiful clump of Milky Bellflower *Campanula lactiflora* was growing close to the Giant Bellflower, *C. latifolia* across the road from the north-end car-park, towards the river. (Incidentally we doubted the name *C. lactiflora* at first, because the New Vegetative Key said the leaves were only up to 2.5cm wide and ours were 5cm wide. However, I should have been measuring lower leaves only!) The canal-type pond was choked with Water Soldier *Stratiotes aloides*, a weird, floating rosette, with white flowers, not found elsewhere in the Lothians. Other introduced species were: Umbrella Pine, *Sciadopitys verticillata*, a single tree and reputed to be one of the best examples in Britain; Red Oak *Quercus rubra*, Large-leaved Lime *Tilia platyphyllos*, Walnut *Juglans regia*, Monkey Puzzle *Araucaria araucana* and Lawson's Cypress *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*; Portugal Laurel, *Prunus lusitanica*, Drooping Larch, *Larix europaea*, Small-leaved Elm, *Ulmus minor* and both forms (Copper and Common) of Beech *Fagus*

sylvatica. One or two Common Spotted Orchids *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* were surviving, having been relocated here from the Gas Works redevelopment site last year.

Douglas McKean

GLADHOUSE RESERVOIR

19th July

Malcolm Lavery

Only a small party of us were ‘mad enough’ (Neville’s words!) to venture out to Gladhouse Reservoir in the midst of a three-day downpour. We were reasonably well rewarded, though, with a variety of wet-heathland plants, several insect species and even the occasional bird.

We met at the car-park near Moorfoot Farm and after a brief discussion decided to start with an exploration of the heath area running along the west side of the loch. This attractive expanse is studded with a variety of native trees, including Goat and Grey Willow *Salix caprea* and *S. cinerea*, Silver Birch *Betula pendula* and Scots Pine *Pinus sylvatica*. We took note of the difference between Goat and Grey Willow, the former with larger, more rounded leaves and the latter with smaller, narrower leaves and a more stunted overall appearance. Hybridisation of course occurs widely within this family. A closer look at the leaves of virtually any birch or willow revealed numerous small yellow-spotted, grey-black larvae of what we took to be Birch Sawfly *Croesus septentrionalis*



More Ringlets

With the rain easing off slightly, we flushed the first of many Ringlet butterflies and an uncountable number of Grass Veneer moths from the ground cover. A Tree Creeper was spotted briefly, ascending a Scots Pine close to the shoreline, but as usual seemed to prefer the ‘wrong’ side of the tree...

Crisscrossing the heath area, we noted the typical plants Lousewort *Pedicularis sylvatica*, Yellow Rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, Common Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, Heath Bedstraw *Galium saxatile* and Marsh Thistle *Cirsium palustre* – some of the latter flowering in white. Among the sedges we encountered were Star, Green-veined, Black, Oval and Carnation (*Carex echinata*, *C. binervis*, *C. nigra*, *C. ovalis* and *C. panicea*); Purple Moor Grass *Molinia caerulea*, *Sphagnum* spp. and Sharp-flowered Rush *Juncus acutiflorus* dominated the heath vegetation.

A solitary Small Heath butterfly was the only competition to the mass of Ringlets, and though we kept hoping for a Large Heath to make an appearance, it didn’t oblige.

Quite a few moths were active – mainly night fliers that we roused from their rest. Those recorded included Large Yellow Underwing, Barred Straw, Willow Beauty, Silver Ground Carpet and Yellow Shell.

We lunched under a clutch of Wild Cherry trees *Prunus avium* whose ripe fruit provided a more than acceptable dessert. Some nearby Bird Cherries *P. padus* had been less fortunate, having had their foliage stripped to the bone by the ravages of the Cherry Ermine Moth caterpillar.

A walk close to the reservoir shoreline brought an encounter with an unusual Oak, whose leaves had a thick, glossy appearance we were unable accurately to match to the many non-native species of this tree.

With rain threatening again, we decided to back-track towards our starting point and make a short day of it. As we left, a Common Hawker dragonfly gave us some final entertainment with its flying display. Dark clouds were rolling ominously over the Moorfoot ridge as we set off home. Fortunately, we were safely in our cars before the skies opened

Malcolm Lavery

DENS CLEUGH, PENTLAND HILLS

25th July

David Adamson

The 2006 calendar of the Pentland Hills Ranger Service has 12 full-page photographs of Pentland landscapes, each accompanied by the route of a suggested walk. Our outing visited three of these scenes, but also followed a path that walkers were formerly discouraged by the landowner from using. This is the route from Black Springs to Logan Cottage via Dens Cleugh, and is still probably the quietest of all the paths that connect the outskirts of Edinburgh with the Logan and Glencorse valley.

Our walk began in sunshine at Harlaw Visitor Centre. Although primarily a botanical outing, a secondary aim was to record Blaeberry bumblebee *Bombus monticola*. This is a small bumblebee easily recognised by its orange-red abdomen and the yellow band behind its head. Only the male of another species, *Bombus lapidarius*, has similar markings, but the extent of the red on *B. lapidarius* is much less, and it generally prefers lowland habitats. The Bumblebee Conservation Trust has been collecting records of *Bombus monticola*, and this was an opportunity to add to them.

The extreme eastern part of Threipmuir Reservoir is known as Black Springs. In 1814 it was called Blackwater Springs, and Edinburgh was viewing it as a possible source of adding to and improving the city’s water supply. The Union Canal had been considered, but rejected on the grounds that it would be contaminated by “accumulations of filth and nuisance”. As the citizens were entitled to expect and pay for

pure, unadulterated spring water, the Magistrates commissioned a report on Black Springs and on a nearby source called Crawley spring, by Castlelaw Hill. In the event, the four springs that made up Black Springs were captured and piped to the city, and the stone posts marked "EWC 1819" appear to trace the underground course of the water from the small stone water-house below Black Hill. We passed two of these stones as we looked down upon the second largest reed-bed in the Lothians at the end of Threipmuir Reservoir.

Black Hill is not rich in showy flowering plants. It is dominated by the three species of heather which, when not in flower, give the hill its dark appearance and its name. It has been managed for the benefit of grouse and sheep for many years. This management involves muirburn and grazing, and the impact of these has been to eliminate many of the species that would naturally be present. The natural vegetation of Black Hill is now confined to a fenced ravine from which sheep have been excluded. This is called the White Cleuch, and it has regenerating woodland of Juniper, Rowan and Birch which we viewed from a distance. The botanical salvation of Black Hill is mainly found in the base-rich flushes of Dens Cleuch which break the monoculture of heather. In the best of these we found the unopened flower buds of Grass of Parnassus *Parnassia palustris*, along with less spectacular plants such as sedges and rushes. The tallest plants were Marsh Thistles *Cirsium palustre*, and it was on these that we found our first Blaeberry bumblebees. We found three, then another three, and some way further on we found a seventh, all on Marsh Thistles.

After looking at a rare Soft Shield Fern *Polystichum setiferum* and some Ostrich Ferns *Matteuccia struthiopteris* at Logan Cottage, we took lunch beside the Logan Burn. There, trout broke the surface, while Buzzards and Kestrels scoured the slopes of Turnhouse Hill for their own lunch.

Small Tortoiseshell butterflies have been scarce recently, and so the cameras appeared when two sunned themselves on a dyke beside Glencorse Reservoir. From Glencorse to the car park at Harlaw is no more than three miles. By the time our advance party had reached their cars, the botanical rearguard was still some two miles behind. Somewhere between the two were those who had become fixated with adding to the lunchtime tally of seven Blaeberry bumblebees: the final total was 41, almost all found foraging on Marsh Thistles. So a botanical walk had, for some of us at least, ended as a bumblebee hunt..... and a very successful one at that.

David Adamson

Footnote: The last mile took us through cultivated fields, one of which was bordered by a handsome introduced grass, Great Brome *Anisantha diandra*. A specimen was sent to Douglas McKean, Botanical Recorder for Midlothian.

JOHN BUCHAN WAY

August 1st.2009

Neville Crowther

The footpath is named after John Buchan, later Lord Tweedsmuir, Governor General of Canada, author, soldier and diplomat, who as a boy spent his summers in this area. The full walk is in two parts. The first half starts at Peebles and runs westward to Stobo. We had elected to walk the second section from Stobo concluding at Broughton. Fifteen of us managed to find parking by the Kirk. The weather was cloudy and blustery, and rain always threatened. For it to occur on the exposed higher part of the walk, would have made things difficult and unpleasant; fortunately that didn't happen.

After an hour of winding through mature mixed woodland and hay meadows alongside the Easton Burn we reached the ruins of Harrowhope for a coffee stop. We had managed to record a migrating Osprey, drifting southwards high above. Molly had found several Spotted Flycatchers. Others spent time in the burnside grassland bright with flowers such as Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and Greater Bird's Foot Trefoil *Lotus pedunculatus*, finding lots of butterflies, mainly Ringlets and Meadow Browns. Antler moths were numerous too, nectaring largely on Marsh Thistles *Cirsium palustre*. Small hillocks above the path had dry herb-rich grassland where the notable species were Mouse-ear hawkweed *Pilosella officinarum*, Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, Thyme *Thymus praecox* and the Heath Grass *Danthonia decumbens*.

After our brief refreshment six people took an easier alternate loop back to Stobo of five miles with little climbing. The rest of us crossed the headwall onto the open moor where flocks of Meadow Pipits augmented by newly fledged juveniles were prominent. Occasional Stonechats 'chatted' on ling stalks, and an aerobatic family group of Ravens croaked over the hilltops. The panicles of grasses were waving in contrasting swathes of colour in the montane grassland and heath: Red fescue *Festuca rubra*, Wavy hair grass *Deschampsia flexuosa*, Brown Bent *Agrostis capillaris*, Mat grass *Nardus stricta* and Sweet vernal *Anthoxanthum odoratum* were all quite distinctive and identifiable.

Jean Long as always, bounded along away from the path discovering rarities that the rest of us would have missed: a dozen Barred Straw moths in the heather, scores of the 'micro' Grass Veneer, and a few Twinspot Carpets. She was distracted only by the glut of blaeberries. Eventually many of us had purple lips too!

Mary and Jackie were attracted to the base-rich flushes that periodically crossed our track and were pleased to record amongst the dominant rushes, Quaking Grass *Briza media*, Marsh Arrowgrass *Triglochin palustris*, and a variety of sedges, Carnation, Black and Yellow

Carex panicea, *nigra* and *viridula*. Tinier still were spikes of yellow-green *Selaginella*, Fairy Flax *Linum catharticum* in fruit and Bristle Club-rush *Isolepis setacea*.

We climbed to our high point below Hammerhead and swung leftwards for the downhill trundle to Broughton, letting gravity do the work. As we dropped towards the gallery at Broughton Place, a laden Wild Cherry tree provided a tasty diversion. For Jean, the delay was at least 15 minutes, and she was one of the last to arrive at the cafe in the village. The rest of us were muddy and tired and conscious that our walk had been considerably longer than 39 steps.

Neville Crowther

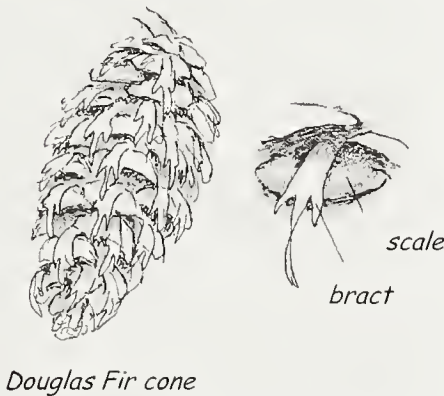
BALLINLUIG SHINGLE

8th August
Jackie Muscott

Large amounts of shingle have been deposited in the River Tummel near Ballinluig. Some of it is quite new, but there is also a large area of older shingle in process of colonisation by assorted vegetation. Once an island, it is now accessible by a narrow land bridge and was the target of the Nats' outing on 8th August.

The approach was through a strip of old woodland and conifer plantation running north from Ballinluig Bridge. Buzzards and Swallows were flying overhead as we entered, to find ourselves among old woodland vegetation including a good deal of Hard Shield Fern *Polystichum lonchitis* lining a ditch.

Then we were climbing up into the conifers, mainly Douglas Fir *Pseudotsuga menziesii* with its very distinctive cones, the bracts sticking out between the scales. (The bracts have been likened to the rear ends of little mice diving into holes.)



We were attracted by a large pile of straw and dung in a field just outside the wood which was covered in mushrooms. They turned out to be the fruiting bodies of *Agrocybe rivulosa*, a fungus new to Britain (and apparently to science) just a few years ago. It is now widespread, being found mainly on wood chips. And then we were down again, crossing to the shingle. It's fairly damp at the crossing and we passed Mare's Tail *Hippuris vulgaris*, Remote Sedge *Carex remota* and a good patch of Wood Club-rush *Scirpus sylvaticus*, a rarity this far north.

We were soon walking through natural woodland and grassland where the shingle had developed a good layer of soil and colonisation was well-advanced. The most common trees were Birches and Willows, with Bird Cherry and Alder. Birch is one of the first colonists of bare ground, and we found an early mushroom often associated with it, the beautiful egg-yolk-yellow *Amanita crocea*. Among the trees were woodland plants like Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum* and patches of Monk's-hood *Aconitum napellus*. In the more open grassland we encountered Pignut *Conopodium majus*, Harebell *Campanula rotundifolia*, Yellow Rattle *Rhinanthus minor*, Cowslip *Primula veris* and the tall, handsome Melancholy Thistle *Cirsium heterophyllum* which has no prickles.

We had lunch by the water's edge, looking out at new shingle islands forming in the river, where binoculars were able to make out Lupins *Lupinus sp.* and Monkey Flower *Mimulus sp.* We were delighted to see Sandpipers and Grey Wagtails, and later we were entertained by a family of Goosanders (eight chicks were counted). Continuing along by the edge of the shingle we passed a number of lime-loving plants: Goldenrod *Solidago virgaurea*, Lesser Meadow Rue *Thalictrum minor*, Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum*, Downy Oat grass *Helictotrichon pubescens* and in wetter places Glaucous Sedge *Carex flacca*. We also passed Bird Cherries seriously affected by the Cherry Ermine Moth, covered in cobwebs and with large batches of cocoons.

Eventually we reached some newer shingle with a small amount of soil and an interesting mix of early colonisers. There were alpine-like Northern Bedstraw *Galium boreale*, Sea Campion *Silene uniflora* which has an interesting montane/maritime distribution, and Viviparous Fescue *Festuca vivipara* a grass which produces ready-to-set-themselves plantlets instead of flowers and seeds. Lime-lovers included Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*, Hairy Rockcress *Arabis hirsuta*, Wild Basil *Clinopodium vulgare* and Rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*; and plants of dry places, Wild Thyme *Thymus polytrichus*, Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Rest Harrow *Ononis repens* and Field Scabious *Knautia arvensis*. There were also a couple of unusual garden escapes: Sweet William *Dianthus barbatus* and Chinese Ragwort *Sinacalia tangutica*.

In the wetter areas we found Marsh Speedwell *Veronica scutellata*, Marsh Yellowcress *Rorippa palustris*, Skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata* and the ubiquitous New Zealand Willowherb *Epilobium brunnescens*. There were tiny frogs and toads hopping about near the river, and in the bare shingle an enormous spider, later identified as *Arctosa cinerea*, a spider which likes to live under rocks near water (precisely where it was).

On the way back we saw one or two butterflies, a Common Blue, some Small Coppers and a Peacock. We had another view of the Grey Wagtails, along with a family of Pied Wagtails and some Sand Martins. At one point during the trip we heard the screech of a Jay. I have been to the shingle several times over the past 20-odd years and have watched it progress from shingle to grass to scrub to woodland. One plant seems to epitomise this. I remember my first sight of Pale Toadflax *Linaria repens* growing over bare shingle. It's still there, but now it's growing in grass under the encroaching trees.

Jackie Muscott

PEASE DEAN

15th August

Mary Clarkson

Pease Dean Reserve lies in the valley where the Tower and Pease Burns join and flow into the sea at Pease Bay on the Berwickshire coast. The Dean has been wooded for at least 700 years, but its wildlife interest was adversely affected in the past by the planting of non-native trees. The Scottish Wildlife Trust bought the Reserve from the Forestry Commission just over 20 years ago, and the main management has been the replacement of Sycamores with native species and the construction of paths to allow easier access. The area beside the lower Pease Burn is open, with grassland, Gorse and Alder while Tower Burn has extensive mixed woodland, Oak, Ash and Hazel with a varied ground flora. On a fine summer's day, the Dean is a most attractive place, loud with song of both resident and migrant birds.

Unfortunately, the day of our visit was anything but fine, and our attempt to find shelter from the driving rain in the café of the nearby caravan site was fruitless, as the café was not yet open. There was nothing for it but to set off. Our route was round the lower Tower Burn and then on a path high above the Pease Burn, crossing it by the road bridge and descending through the woods by steep steps and a path. Once we had started, things did not seem so bad and we were greeted at the entrance gate by a stand of Giant Horsetail *Equisetum telmateia*. Ferns were at their best and we soon found many including Hart's Tongue *Phyllitis scolopendrium* and the speciality of the Reserve, Soft Shield Fern *Polystichum setiferum*, which is a species of the south and west and uncommon north of the Border. Flowering plants were largely over, but among those recognised were Enchanter's Nightshade *Circaea lutetiana*, Golden Saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium*, Red Campion *Silene dioica* and Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*. Alas, the birds were all taking cover, but we did find some fungi: several Russulas, *Russula cyanoxantha*, *R. foetens* and *R. queletii*, as well as the tiny Common Eyelash fungus *Scutellinia scutellata* (all identified later by Elizabeth Farquharson).

Interestingly, both rusts which occur on Enchanter's Nightshade were there, *Puccinia circaeae* and *Pucciniastrum circaeae*. The weather cleared as we started to descend through the trees, and a Speckled Wood Butterfly, uncommon in these parts, made an appearance. After lunch, the group walked in sunshine along the shore, and some speculated on the origin of the sandstone cliffs on the west side of the beach, while the plant-hunters found Hemp Agrimony *Eupatorium cannabinum* on the slope below as House Martins flew in and out of their rocky nest-holes high above us.

Mary Clarkson

Footnote: The record of Speckled Wood may be only the second for Scottish Borders. The Grid reference was NT792701, and this may be a new hectad for the species.

Neville Crowther

CLEARBURN LOCH

22nd August

Roger Holme

Five keen Nats (Roger, Neville, Jackie, Mary, Lyn) made the journey to Clearburn Loch on the Ettrick Valley-to-Hawick road. Eunice and Dennis Smith turned up a bit later but, being without wellingtons, stayed for only a short time. This is a fascinating site, which, since our visit, has been designated by the plant-conservation charity Plantlife as an important plant area.

First, we visited the place where an interesting grass had recently been discovered. It appeared to be Purple Small Reed *Calamagrostis canescens*, but a subsequent telephone conversation with the Vice County Recorder had cast doubt on this. He visited the site and determined that it was *C. x gracilescens*, (*C. canescens* x *stricta*), making this the first confirmed site for the hybrid in Scotland!

Since the recce two weeks before, heavy rainfall had raised the water level in the two streams that have to be crossed to make a full circuit of the loch. Nevertheless, the first channel was just crossable.... with care and wellingtons... making it possible to get to the loch, though not right round it.

At the crossing point, several interesting species were found, including Knotted Pearlwort *Sagina nodosa*. After the crossing, we found a Fox Moth larva, and an interesting spider, *Araneus quadratus*, with its nesting

Araneus
quadratus



cocoon, on *Molinia*. Later, further individuals were found of three colour variations, green, yellow, chocolate brown. From there, a short rise took us onto bog vegetation where Cranberry *Vaccinium oxycoccos* was abundant.

By the edge of the loch, we looked for Bladderwort *Utricularia*, for a Bur-reed *Sparganium* (thought to be *S. angustifolium*, which would be a new Vice County record) and for Perfoliate Pondweed *Potamogeton perfoliatus*, all of which had been found on the recce, which had been on a brighter day. Unfortunately the high water level made it impossible to find them again. A Haworth's Minor Moth had also been found in this area during the recce.

In the fen at the western end of the loch by the intake stream we found a mound of Slender Sedge *Carex lasiocarpa*, producing copious flowering heads, not always seen on this species. Nearby were two species of Tussock Sedge: Lesser Tussock Sedge *Carex diandra* and a single tuft of Greater Tussock Sedge *Carex paniculata*. A debate took place over some flowering whorls of Mint – Jackie later confirmed these to be *Mentha x verticillata* (*M. aquatica* x *M. arvensis*).

The loch had a good population of White Water Lily *Nymphaea alba* and of Yellow Water Lily *Nuphar lutea*. Heading east along the far side of the loch, we found the bright green leaves and distinctive seed heads of Holy Grass *Hierochloa odorata*. Just a bit further along an interesting flush contained Grass of Parnassus *Parnassia palustris* and the leaves of Common Butterwort *Pinguicula vulgaris* – these had been in flower just two weeks earlier, but only seeding heads remained now. The flush also contained Dioecious sedge *Carex dioica*.

While others enjoyed a late lunch, Jackie wandered up a burn close by to find Lemon-scented Fern *Oreopteris limbosperma*. We then retraced our steps, cutting over the bog at a higher level.

Roger Holme

THE CLINK AND AUCHTERMUCHTY COMMON

29th August

Neville Crowther

Having consented to lead the walk but not having visited the area before, and with the date set in late summer, I was perhaps risking a mishap. As it transpired, although there was a brisk breeze, the sun shone, and a good attendance of knowledgeable members meant many interesting observations were made and verbal contributions flowed freely. The

morning was spent at the Clink, which is the eastward extension of Pitmedden Forest and the afternoon on Auchtermuchty Common.

The forest owned by Forest Enterprise was planted mainly about 60 years ago. Although some areas are mixed, large areas are dominated by Sitka Spruce, Scots Pine and hybrid larch. Thinning took place a couple of decades ago, and the remaining trees are well spaced and up to 35m. tall. We followed a good path around three sides of the forest passing the Clink, which disappointingly turned out to be a caravan site.

With the flavour of autumn in the air, the fruiting bodies of fungi were frequent, and the opportunity arose to reacquaint ourselves with their names. They included the Beechwood Sickener *Russula marei*, the Pelargonium Scented Russula *R. fellea* and the Slimy Milk Cap *Lactarius blennius* under beech; *Calocera viscosa* on Spruce stumps; the Deceivers *Laccaria laccata* and *amethystina*; Stinkhorns *Phallus impudicus*; Jelly babies *Leotia lubrica* and Common Puffball *Lycoperdon perlatum* in leaf litter; *Tyromyces stipticus*, the conifer rotter, *Heterobasidion annosus* (smelling of turpentine) and Turkey Tails *Trametes versicolor* on fallen logs.

We passed on downhill into the community woodland at Glassarts Den, where we consumed our picnic lunches. This recent woodland on the edge of Pitmedden Forest was composed of newer plantings of Rowan, Hazel, Italian Alder, Aspen, and Glean.

There was an interesting footpath in the woods beside a burn which led to the entrance to the Common. Unfortunately we didn't discover the path until returning a couple of hours later. Instead we trod the tarmac for 600m. parallel to it. The Common is maintained with loving care by local Commoners, who strim the paths and cut the invading whins. A survey of butterflies is maintained throughout the summer months. Horses are grazed between November and March to keep down coarse vegetation. In keeping with the use of horses, a neatly painted Romany caravan nestles in a remote corner.

Although the weather had been rough and windy for the previous few weeks there were still lots of flowering herbs. Newly emerged Painted Lady adults were nectaring on Field Scabious *Knautia arvensis*, Devil's Bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis* and Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*. (It was only about 12 weeks ago that the parental generation were arriving from Spain and North Africa.) Among the prettiest of flowers were the Common Toadflax *Linaria vulgaris*, abundant everywhere. Still in flower, but sometimes only just, were Square-stalked St John's Wort *Hypericum tetrapterum*, Red Bartsia *Odontites vernus*, Tormential *Potentilla erecta*, Lady's Bedstraw *Galium verum*, Smooth Lady's Mantle *Alchemilla glabra*, Burnet saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga* and, away from its

normal coastal grasslands, but apparently introduced, the Wild Carrot *Daucus carota*.

Other butterflies observed included Peacock, Small Tortoiseshell, Red Admiral, Small Copper and Large White. Another migrant and a strong flier, the Silver Y moth was also present on the grassland. A moth of late summer, the Brown Line Bright Eye *Mythimna conigera* (not to be confused with the Bright Line Brown Eye *Lacanobia oleracea*) was nectaring on Knapweed. Hoverflies abounded, even in the wind. Marmalade flies *Episyrphus balteatus* were the most common, but the Large Bog Hoverfly *Sericomysia silentis* was the biggest one seen. Other wasp mimics included species from the genera *Syrphus* and *Helophilus*.

There were a few planted Pedunculate Oaks *Quercus robur* in the northern part of the common, and, soon after arriving, Jackie was finding interesting galls. Knopper galls are a new phenomenon for our generation: the wasp responsible *Andricus quercuscalicis*, arrived in UK only about 1960, and in Scotland in 1997. The oaks on the common bore many other types of gall, including two different spangle galls, currant galls and marble galls. A colourful red and green gall on roses known as the 'Robin's Pincushion' is caused by a small wasp called *Diplolepis rosae*. Every rose bush seemed to have one.

Although we had soaring and mewing Buzzards all day, we saw little else of bird life until late afternoon when we found Linnets and Yellowhammers flitting between rose bushes and brambles in the southern half of the common. By then clouds were scudding in from the west and home beckoned.

Neville Crowther

HARTSIDE HILL

5th September

Michael Braithwaite

A party of eleven met under leaden skies with a stiff north-westerly blowing, to explore the forestry on Hartside Hill. While some were debating whether to don woollie hats, others had noticed that the bankings by the forestry car park were covered in large plants of Stag's-horn Clubmoss *Lycopodium clavatum*. This plant proved to be extraordinarily abundant along 3km of track. It seems to have first colonised the foot of the shallowly V-shaped, stony ditches that adjoin the track.

While the plantation was mainly Sitka Spruce *Picea sitchensis*, Lodgepole and Scots Pines *Pinus contorta* and *P. sylvestris* had been used to vary the margins. It was the Lodgepole Pine that had much the more frequently self-seeded into the track sides.

Silver Birch *Betula pendula* had been planted: as so often it was a selected variety, possibly not British, with a very white trunk but hardly pendulous. Willows had probably both been planted and colonised naturally. One, near a planted Goat Willow *Salix caprea*, caused debate. Examination later showed that it combined the large buds, angled out from a stout twig, of *S. caprea* with the narrowly ovate leaves carrying a thin indumentum of Sallow *S. cinerea*, making it a form of their hybrid *S. x reichardtii*.

The Eyebrights proved interesting. While

Euphrasia confusa was seen near the foot of the track, the Eyebright abundant along all 3km of track side was the locally scarce *E. micrantha* with its purple flowers closely mimicking those of the heather by which it grew. *E. arctica* ssp. *borealis* was seen only on the open moor at the top of the hill.



Higher on the hill, Alpine Clubmoss *Diphasiastrum alpinum* occurred in modest quantity on flat, stony track sides, especially in the passing places, and in one of these a single plant of Fir Clubmoss *Huperzia selago* was found, the first Berwickshire record since 1896. This find caused the leader to attract attention by dancing a jig to the tune of 'Oop-oop-oop-Huperzia'.

The recent heavy rain had spurred on the development of many fungal fruiting bodies. We were able to identify *Russula emetica*, *Suillus granulatus* and *Agaricus campestris* under the Spruces. Orange Peel fungus *Aleuria aurantica* and the Puffball *Lycoperdon perlatum* were limited to the forest tracks. The trackside embankment was rich in lichens of two genera *Peltigera* and *Cladonia*.

Fir Clubmoss

For the first time in weeks, no butterflies were seen, but a colourful, longitudinally striped moth caterpillar caused some interest. It turned out to be the larva of Broom Moth *Melanchra pisi*, which feeds on ling, broom, bracken or sallows, all available nearby. On the open moorland Fox Moth caterpillars were abundant on the ling, often around 6cm long.



Following the track out onto the open moor, we left behind all the clubmosses, and a short descent took the party into the head of a burn with much scrub of Eared Willow *Salix aurita*. The flushes proved disappointing, as the recent heavy rains had removed the last fruits from the sedges. Quaking Grass *Briza media* was just

about the sum of the botanical interest, and so the party returned to the forestry track for the descent.

Michael Braithwaite

CLOICH HILLS

12th September

David Adamson

In Autumn of 2008 *The Scotsman* had included two booklets of autumn walks in Scotland, one on hills and the other in woodlands. Among the woodland walks was one that starts in Eddleston, progresses through the policies of the Barony Castle Hotel, and meets the old post road that runs north and south parallel to today's main road from Edinburgh to Peebles. The walk forms a rectangle, following forest tracks, an old drove road, a former post road and a minor road, altogether covering a distance of perhaps eight miles. A winter walk had hinted at its possibilities as a venue for a natural-history excursion.

Two weeks before this outing, a practice walk had taken some three hours, covering the ground at a good pace. The excursion on 12th September was inevitably more leisurely, those first back at Eddleston having covered the circuit in six hours. Some took rather longer than this, but the extraordinary display of fungi that coloured the woodland floor in every shade of red, yellow and brown was ample reason for the additional time.

The warm sun shone constantly from a blue sky empty of cloud. Butterflies fed on late summer flowers such as Devil's bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis* and Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*. Cattle sunbathed in the fields. This was Blandings Castle weather *par excellence*.

The general in charge of this expedition thought that some might prefer to stride out and cover the miles at a fast pace (by Nats' standards that is) and that some would prefer to record the plentiful fungi in the vicinity of Barony Castle. General Lee had divided his army at Chancellorsville and it had worked fairly well. Alas, this was not the disciplined Confederacy, and some of the marchers soon became entranced by the fungi, while some of the forayers became unusually fleet of foot. Meanwhile two deserters were turned in to their officers by a farmer on a motorbike.



Red Admiral on Sheeps-bit

The two divisions had become one by lunchtime and, in best Society tradition, then split into three after lunch. At least

all managed to follow the same route and were able to see probably the largest bolete fungus in history. It lay in the deep shade of conifers in apparent ambush at the end of a long forest path and could have provided a seat for a very overweight pixie. Unlike a nearby smaller brother, this giant *Boletus edulis* was in excellent condition. I believe that Neville managed to heave it into the middle of the path, no doubt causing an obstruction to those following.

The main natural-history interest was in the fungi, and two of the company promised to compile a list...which will be very long. The butterfly list is shorter, and this is it. We saw Small Tortoiseshell, Comma, Red Admiral, Peacock, Painted Lady and Green-veined White. Birds were scarce in the conifer plantations, and the only wild mammals seen were rabbits. However, the general feeling of those hirpling past the Scottish Ambulance Training Centre to their cars in the late afternoon sunshine was that they had been fortunate to see the Cloich Hills at their very best.

David Adamson

MOTH-TRAPPING AT CAMMO

16th September

Neville Crowther

It was a pleasant surprise to find ten members assembling at the Cammo Visitors' Centre as the sun sank behind the trees on 16th September. After selecting what looked to be a promising site, Dave Aiton, Helen Chisholm and I had set up our traps a little while before, and we strolled back there to attach the batteries to the Actinic tubes. We chatted for about 30 minutes about moths, trapping, life cycles and identification until the UV tubes switched on automatically as the light intensity dropped below a certain point.

This evening had followed a delightful day of



sunshine, after a summer where so much of the weather had been disappointing. It was cloudless and still, and the temperature dropped quickly as darkness fell. Even the midges found it too cold and disappeared from

about 7.30. Unfortunately moths, like midges, prefer warm, humid and overcast conditions. At no time before had I ever failed to catch even a single moth, but this night changed that.

Several bats swirled around the tree tops, and we reflected that a bat-recorder might be a good idea in the future, if moths don't arrive. We were entertained by at least four Tawny Owls calling – probably juveniles according to Helen and Dave, who are experienced raptor ringers. One owl flew across the clearing, ghostlike, a few feet above our heads. But NO MOTHS!

The cold and lack of activity eventually drove us home. The discussion was about how to improve it next time. In future, we decided, it would be much better to have a mid-summer event, even with the later start, or to use a secure site and invite people to come at dawn for an early morning ID session. We will see.

Neville Crowther

PENICUIK ESTATE

19th September

Mike Richardson

About 16 people met at the Penicuik Estate car-park on a grey and drizzly morning, but the improvement was such that we ate lunch in sunshine. The mycology was slow to begin with, it having been cold and, for the few days before, quite dry. The group soon got into its stride, however, and the usual suspects began to appear. Some nice ergots of *Claviceps purpurea* on Timothy *Phleum pratense* were found early on, along the drive, and then we were into the woodland, with some *Russula*, *Lactarius*, *Amanita* and *Boletus* species, Brown Roll Rim *Paxillus involutus* and Sulphur Tuft *Hypholoma fasciculare*.

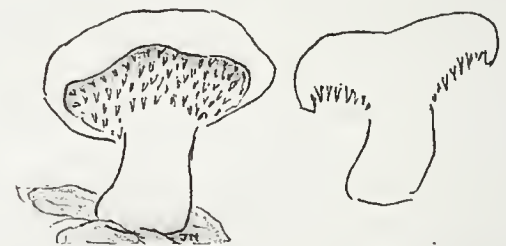
Interest was shown in the ruins of the house, which is being restored, but the surrounding grassland was surprisingly devoid of the usual grassland fungi – possibly we were a little early in the season. After the house, we headed across the parkland south towards the Low Pond, and, with the moisture in the air, some cow pats had nice fruiting fungi. Four species were visible and identifiable with a hand lens in the field – *Coprobacia granulata*, *Ascobolus furfuraceus*, *Thelebolus microsporus* and a *Pilobolus*. Springtails *Collembola* were having a good feast on the fungi, especially the *Coprobacia*. More of these dung fungi appeared with incubation at home.

We then had lunch, sitting on some stumps so that we could continue searching, and found among others *Collybia cookei*, Shaggy Pholiota *Pholiota squarrosa* and Artist's Fungus *Ganoderma applanata*, a large woody bracket, so-called because you can draw pictures in the layer of pores beneath.

After lunch we moved on past the Low Pond, where Jackie Muscott went in search of and found a different ergot *Claviceps nigricans* on Common Spike Rush *Eleocharis palustris*.

Ergot on Spike Rush

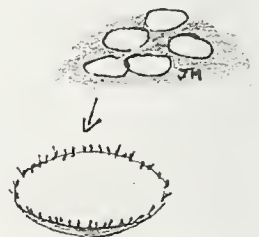
At Hurley Pond, scrub clearance and woodland management had left some open ground where more mushrooms were added to our list, including the large colourful *Boletus calopus*, Hedgehog Fungus *Hydnum repandum* (white or pink, with spikes instead of gills or spores) and two chanterelles, *Cantharellus cibarius* and *C. tubaeformis* were found, plus the odd-looking Earth Fan *Thelephora penicillata* on wet, clayey soil and *Anthracobia macrocystis* on a bonfire site.



Hedgehog Fungus

Then back along the woodland track down the valley of the North Esk, with good specimens of spruce plantation fungi and some interesting and attractive small cup fungi, like *Ascocoryne cylichnium* and the tiny, bright-orange cups with black 'eyelashes' of the Eyelash Fungus *Scutellinia scutellata*.

We ended up with a list of about 100 species in total, including some useful records from members of the party with special interests.



Eyelash Fungus

The Society's thanks are due to Sir Robert Clerk of Penicuik House for his kind permission to collect in the woodland. He also sent a warm letter of thanks for our list of the many fungi we had identified

Mike Richardson

BINNING WOOD

3rd October

Neville Kilkenny

High winds dominated the night before and were persisting on the morning of the foray. There had been little rain for the previous fortnight and little evidence of fungal fruiting at many sites across East Lothian

during the previous few days, and so it was a relief to find that there were several toadstools as well as resupinate fruitbodies of some wood-rotting fungi to interest the group. However this was a poor outcome in comparison to the abundance of species recorded on a visit to the wood a month before. The group was led by Neville Kilkenny, the field trip intended as a ‘thank you’ to the Society for support towards training costs whilst studying mycology. Mary Clarkson added her considerable experience to help produce a very respectable list of fungi, to which other knowledgeable members of the group, such as Jackie Muscott and Neville Crowther also contributed.

Woodchip piles along the main track through the woodland were covered with a large ringed species relatively new to Scotland, *Agrocybe rivulosa*. This species was first described from The Netherlands in 2003 and then found in Derbyshire the following year. The first record for Scotland was in 2007, and the fungus is now to be found on any woodchip pile near you! This reflects how the fungus has taken advantage of this niche habitat, as woodchip has begun to be widely used in parkland and woodland management.

It was a real pleasure to see Green Elfcup *Chlorociboria aeruginascens* fruiting. This fungus is often recognized as it turns green the timber that the mycelium colonises; but it is not so often observed fruiting. The green-stained wood is often used in ornate decorative parquetry. The scaly, brown-capped *Tricholoma imbricatum* was observed fruiting under Scots Pine, its mycorrhizal host. Two oak-rotting specialists, Oak Curtain Crust *Hymenochaete rubiginosa* and Oak Mazegill *Daedalea quercina*, were also recorded, as well as many other common fungi. The sun briefly warmed the party over lunch, but everybody was relieved to escape the blustery wind in the warmth of the coffee shop in Tynninghame to discuss the day’s finds.

LIST OF SPECIES FOUND

<i>Agrocybe rivulosa</i>	No common name
<i>Amanita citrina</i> var. <i>alba</i>	False Deathcap
<i>Amanita citrina</i> var. <i>citrina</i>	False Deathcap
<i>Ampulloclitocybe clavipes</i>	No common name
<i>Armillaria gallica</i> Bulbous	Honey Fungus
<i>Armillaria mellea</i>	Honey Fungus
<i>Bolbitius titubans</i> var. <i>titubans</i>	No common name
<i>Calocera viscosa</i>	Yellow Stagshorn
<i>Chlorociboria aeruginascens</i>	Green Elfcup
<i>Chlorophyllum rhacodes</i>	No common name
<i>Collybia maculata</i>	Spotted Toughshank
<i>Collybia peronata</i>	Wood Woollyfoot
<i>Coprinus comatus</i>	Shaggy Inkcap/ Lawyer's Wig
<i>Dacrymyces stillatus</i>	Common Jelly Spot

<i>Daedalea quercina</i>	Oak Mazegill
<i>Diatrype disciformis</i>	Beech Barkspot
<i>Erysiphe alphitoides</i>	No common name
<i>Galerina</i> sp.	No common name
<i>Gymnopilus penetrans</i>	Common Rustgill
<i>Hebeloma crustuliniforme</i>	Poisonpie
<i>Hebeloma</i> sp.	No common name
<i>Heterobasidion annosum</i>	Root Rot
<i>Hymenochaete rubiginosa</i>	Oak Curtain Crust
<i>Hypholoma fasciculare</i>	Sulphur Tuft
<i>Hypholoma marginatum</i>	Snakeskin Brownie
<i>Hypoxylon fragiforme</i>	Beech Woodward
<i>Hypoxylon multifforme</i>	Birch Woodward
<i>Inocybe geophylla</i>	White Fibrecap
<i>Kretzschmaria deusta</i>	Brittle Cinder
<i>Laccaria amethystina</i>	Amethyst Deceiver
<i>Lactarius pubescens</i>	Bearded Milkcap
<i>Leccinum scabrum</i>	Brown Birch Bolete
<i>Mycena filopes</i>	Iodine Bonnet
<i>Mycena galericulata</i>	Common Bonnet
<i>Mycena galopus</i>	Milking Bonnet
<i>Mycena leptcephala</i>	Nitrous Bonnet
<i>Mycena</i> sp.	No common name
<i>Mycena</i> sp.	No common name
<i>Piptoporus betulinus</i>	Birch Polypore/ Razorstrop
	Deer Shield
<i>Pluteus cervinus</i>	
<i>Polyporus</i>	
<i>leptocephalus</i>	Blackfoot Polypore
<i>Postia caesia</i> Conifer	Blueing Bracket
<i>Postia stiptica</i>	Bitter Bracket
<i>Rhytisma acerinum</i>	Sycamore Tarspot
<i>Russula betularum</i>	Birch Brittlegill
<i>Russula claroflava</i>	Yellow Swamp Brittlegill
<i>Russula cyanoxantha</i>	Charcoal Burner
<i>Russula fellea</i>	Geranium Brittlegill
<i>Russula nigricans</i>	Blackening Brittlegill
<i>Russula ochroleuca</i>	Ochre Brittlegill
<i>Russula sardonica</i>	Primrose Brittlegill
<i>Russula</i> sp.	No common name
<i>Russula</i> sp.	No common name
<i>Scleroderma citrinum</i>	Common Earthball
<i>Stereum hirsutum</i>	Hairy Curtain Crust
<i>Tricholoma fulvum</i>	Birch Knight
<i>Tricholoma imbricatum</i>	Matt Knight
<i>Tricholoma saponaceum</i>	
var. <i>squamosum</i>	No common name
<i>Xerula radicata</i>	Rooting Shank
<i>Xylaria hypoxylon</i>	Candlesnuff Fungus

Neville Kilkenny

BARNS NESS, SKATERAW AND TORNESS

10th October

Tom Delaney

On the road to Barns Ness, a huge flock of Goldfinches and Linnets sat on the wires overlooking the large landfill site there. A Roc buck walked slowly and unconcerned across a field of barley stubble. Many of the adjacent fields had been ploughed in the last couple of days. The recent persistently fine, westerly weather promised little in the way of migrants, and investigation of the bushes surrounding the ruined farmhouse at the top of the track turned up only garden birds such as Dunnock, Wren, Robin, Song Thrush and Blackbird.



Gannet was the predominant species over the sea, which was flat calm. Lines of birds including just a few dark-plumaged young ones headed to and from the Bass Rock. Occasionally a distant group would be seen feeding, plunging into the sea from a great height. On the shore a flock of 200 or more Golden Plovers were hard to pick out, preening and snoozing on the rocks. Curlews, Oystercatchers and Redshanks were also feeding. Far out, an Arctic Skua chased a Sandwich Tern, and there were one or two auks, but, with the surface so calm, most birds must have ventured much farther out than we could see.

We walked around the wire dump.... a classic site in past years for autumn migrants such as warblers, flycatchers, shrikes and rarities such as Yellow-browed and Barred Warbler. Today, however, we could find only Goldfinches and in the surrounding Elder scrub a good number of Blackbirds and a few Song Thrushes.... plus a single toad. A Buzzard sat on a pole by the quarry and a Stonechat and a couple of Linnets sat on the boundary fence. There were a few clumps of Scots Lovage *Ligusticum scoticum* on the sandy shore, its dried seed-heads every bit as nice as the flower heads must have been earlier in the year.

We moved on to Skateraw harbour. The weather became warmer, and lunch was taken on the beach. We were entertained by a couple of Rock Pipits feeding close by on the seaweed. Close inspection showed their legs were indeed black, as Mary had declared. On the rocks, Redshank was the principal bird... there was no sign of the Bar-tailed Godwits that had been there the previous day.

A birder reported a Willow Warbler/Chiffchaff glimpsed in the bushes by the lime-kiln, but it declined to show itself to us.

Willow/Chiff?

We took the cliff path to Torness, seeing a couple of Red Admiral butterflies on the



way and the odd seal or two offshore. A single Red-throated Diver flew west, and a flight of five Red-breasted Mergansers and a few Eiders, emerging from their eclipse plumage, passed east. The anglers fishing from the pathway had little to show for their efforts... a single small Coley fish in a bucket.... though they were able to tell of excellent catches there on other occasions, including, apparently, Mackerel, large Cod and Wrasse. Arriving at Torness, we found the resident Peregrines at home: the male sat atop the building with his back to us, but the female soared effortlessly high above the power station.

Meantime, Jackie Muscott walked along the rocks and found a fine stand of Yellow Horned Poppy *Glaucium flavum*, quite rare so far north, apparently the second most northerly group known in the UK and now comprising many more plants than on the Nats' previous visit a few years earlier.

We returned to the car-park, and most dispersed homeward, having had a fine if migrant-free day.

Horned Poppy



I lingered for a while, however and seeing a small group of birders at the ruined cottage on the other side of the bay, joined them and saw they *had* located an *actual* autumn migrant! It was tiny and elusive, moving quickly as it fed on flies and caterpillars among the withered leaves of a stunted Sycamore

After a few fleeting glimpses, however, it yielded good views, revealing a broad, pale supercilium and double wing-bar: it was a very smart Yellow-browed Warbler. That evening, Lothian Bird News reported that this was one of two that had turned up that day, the other having been found in Dunbar.

Tom Delaney

GLENTRESS

14th November

Jean Murray

My worries that there might be no spaces in the chosen car park as happened when I last visited proved to be unfounded. Maybe the weather forecast had put some of the cyclists off.

I had chosen the Glen Walk which starts alongside the ponds. No birds to be seen. We were surprised to find little fallen apples by the path; crab apples we thought but some at least were proper apples and worth eating. The path then went into deeper forest where there were plenty of mosses but the light was not good and I was complaining that everything was too wet to see the detail clearly.

My plan had been to look for mosses already known from previous outings like *Thuidium tamariscinum* Tamarisk Moss, feathery, red-stemmed *Hylocomium splendens*, Glittering Wood Moss, *Rytidiadelphus triquetrus*, Shaggy (Teddy bear) Moss and *R. squarrosus* Lawn Moss. All were found along with the Nats' current most recognised *Plagiothecium undulatum* Wavy Flat Moss, which we know as White Worms. There was some muttering about it being green - that was because it was so wet! On previous outings, mosses on trees had been of the mat-forming *Hypnum* species. This time, where it was open enough for Birch, Elder or Willow, we found dark green cushions of *Orthotrichum*, most likely *O. affine*, which obligingly had plentiful ridged, yellowish capsules among the leaves.

For the first time we ventured into liverworts. *Diplophyllum albicans* White Earwort or Doublewort was growing on a peaty bank, distinctive because of the white band down the centre of the leaves, the only liverwort to have such a feature. (I've given the two names because English ones are recent and can vary depending on the book you're using).

There were quite a few fungi about: some Sulphur Tuft, one or two *Mycenas* and a *Pholiota* and something Mary Clarkson said was *Heterobasidium annosum*, the conifer stump-rotter. By this time we were close to the car park and opted to eat lunch in the cars. Eileen Perry had kindly invited us back for tea or indeed earlier if the weather really closed in, and so some people went on there, but a few of us decided to try a bit of the planned afternoon walk. It starts along the Red Squirrel Walk and comes out on to the edge of the forest before going uphill and, on a good day, gives wonderful views over the valley and up towards Peebles. Earlier this area would have been good for fungi, particularly *Russulas*.

The weather was definitely deteriorating, and so we decided to join the others. It always seems to add to the enjoyment of the day when there's a get-together and a cup of tea afterwards.

Many thanks to Eileen for welcoming a rather damp collection of Nats once again.

Jean Murray

RIVERSIDE AT MUSSELBURGH

29th December

Janet Watson

For this year's Christmas walk and lunch, we chose Musselburgh as being suitable for those who did not want to walk far... or even at all. We had not, however allowed for a prolonged spell of snow and ice, and so only 12 members turned up for the walk and one more for the lunch. It snowed during our walk, but that helped make safer the icy surfaces underfoot.

The river proved to be a surprising magnet for wildlife, mainly water birds.

We disturbed a pair of Herons several times as they flew upstream ahead of us. Initially Black-headed Gulls were quite numerous but as we left the town they disappeared and were replaced by small groups of

Goldeneyes and Red-breasted Mergansers, reluctant to fly, and diving to feed or perhaps to evade our eyes. Mallards were numerous, sheltering from the wind and snow against the higher leeward banks of



the river. A few were up-ending in the rapids, eating weed and moss. Small numbers of Cormorant and Goosander also flew by at speed. We looked in vain for Dipper and Grey Wagtail which I had gambled upon seeing, but it was just too icy.

Remarkably, someone discovered a toad, walking purposefully towards the river, holding its arched body well clear of the snow. It eventually began to claw its way under tussocks of vegetation, perhaps regretting its decision to leave a similar hibernation site elsewhere. As we neared the bridge carrying the A1, four species of thrush thrashed around in the woodland ivy on the banks. Mistle and Song Thrush plus Redwing and Fieldfare were all involved in the scrabble for food.



It was not until we had turned back towards Inveresk village that other songbirds became numerous. Along a bank with tumbling scrub vegetation we saw a large family party of acrobatic Long-tailed Tits with several of their Great Tit and Blue Tit cousins. Three

Bullfinches flashed their white rumps as they paced us along the path with its fringing thistle-heads. As we entered the area of housing, small flocks of Chaffinch, Goldfinch and House Sparrow became more numerous. Several of us were convinced that some birds had already begun their territorial songs... a hopeful belief, but misplaced as it turned out!

As we passed by Loretto School, there were groups of Oystercatcher and Curlew probing through the shallow snow into the earth of the playing fields. Perhaps it was high tide, or maybe too unpleasant to be out on the mussel-beds. We however were only minutes away from hot coffee and a very enjoyable Christmas lunch.

Neville Crowthe

GALLOWAY 8TH-12TH JUNE

KNOWE TOP LOCHS

8th June

Graham Smith

This being the first point on our projected week's programme, our arrival here after a long journey was somewhat staggered. Our host, Graham Smith, the SWT Reserve Convenor, introduced us to the site, one of the Trust's oldest properties. I had been there 30 years before, and although I found it still recognisable, the growth of the trees, particularly the conifers, had altered its character from the open scrub and moorland I remembered to a more sheltered and enclosed range of habitats. While we waited for later arrivals, we wandered around the board-walk, through Willow scrub, bog and swamp. Graham showed us his 'Adder traps', comprising sheets of corrugated iron which absorb the heat of sunlight and tempt the snakes to snooze beneath.

A major target for us here was to be Large Heath, one of Scotland's rarest butterflies... and, according to our guide, not usually in flight until June 10th. We began to patrol an area of heath, where there was Cotton Grass *Eriophorum angustifolium* its larval food plant. Expectations were high, despite confusion due to Small Heath butterflies and dozens of Common Heath moths which raised our hopes. We watched one of the moths being devoured by a Green Orb Spider *Araniella cucurbitina* and were distracted by small clump of the rarity Bog Rosemary *Andromeda polifolia* and by Cranberries *Vaccinium oxycoccos* and Bog Asphodel *Narthecium ossifragum*. Then, suddenly, a Large Heath was discovered, quickly followed by four more, all bright from recent emergence. After the fuss diminished and photos had been taken, we continued around our circular path with other targets in mind.

Small lochans were discovered and found to be the place for Gold-ringed Dragonflies and Four-spotted Chasers. Large Red and Common Blue Damsels were also found in good numbers. The woodland echoed to the drumming of Great Spotted Woodpeckers, and the reedbeds and carr to the song of Willow Warblers, Reed Buntings and Sedge Warblers. We became aware of having passed into the western Scotland watershed when the swampy ground was seen to be full of Whorled Caraway *Carum verticillatum*, virtually absent from the east. Globe Flower *Trollius europaeus*, White Water Lily, *Nymphaea alba* and Marsh Bedstraw *Galium palustre* were all ticked off. A large female Adder was found slumbering on the board-walk after several of the party had unknowingly stepped over it. Some exclamations were unrepeatable. It was to be the last major event of the afternoon, as we returned to the cars to finish our journey.

Neville Crowther

WOOD OF CREE AND OTTER POOL

9th June

No leader

The RSPB Wood of Cree reserve lies about 5 miles north of Minnigaff, on the east bank of the River Cree. It is the largest ancient wood in southern Scotland and contains a wide variety of plant and animal species. It was a grand day for our visit, and, as we foregathered at the site car-park, we were welcomed by a loud, insistent song from the tops of the surrounding Ash trees: it was a Garden Warbler, whose territory we had obviously invaded.

Close to the car-park there is a platform, which gives views upriver over a broad, still stretch of water, the Otter Pool, where Otters are often reported. A short spell there (while waiting for the RSPB warden who was to be our leader) produced no Otters, but we had good views of numerous Sedge Warblers flying to and from nests in the riverside vegetation.

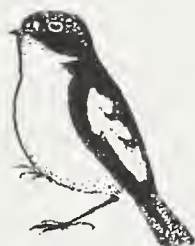
Our leader didn't show up, and so we pressed on into the wood, climbing steeply up among moss-clad boulders and beside tumbling streams. The wood is carpeted with bilberry, lit up by frequent swathes of Cow-wheat *Melampyrum pratense*, glowing golden

yellow under the Oaks, Bluebells *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, Greater Stitchwort *Stellaria holostea*, Primroses *Primula vulgaris* and lots of Pignut *Conopodium majus*, with black Chimmney Sweeper Moths in attendance. Cushions of the silver-green moss *Leucobryum glaucum* and the two woodland sedges *Carex remota* and *sylvatica* add to the variety underfoot.

A pair of Spotted Flycatchers had a nest in an open hole at the top of a dead sapling, the sitting adult being fed by her partner. There were numerous nest boxes, many used by Great Tits and Blue Tits, and we had to climb a good way before seeing the first one occupied by Pied Flycatchers, the signature species of this fine oak woodland: thereafter we found a total of five such.

A Woodcock flushed as we made our way through the trees, and we heard the intriguing song of Wood Warbler: a repetitive 'spinning-coin' trill, followed every so often by a powerful, descending 'tew tew tew'. Its song led us to the bird, and we were able to see how its whole body shook with the force of its delivery. In the scrubbiest areas at the top of the hill Whitethroats were singing.

Pied Flycatcher



On our return to the car-park, the Garden Warbler was still in full flow, and there were still no Otters to be seen at the platform, but it was felt worth a further try if time allowed later in the week.

Neville Crowther and Tom Delaney



Footnote: The following evening, TD went again to the Otter Pool... but it remained an Otter-free zone. However, the next morning, TD and Elaine Walters went there really early and, after a short wait (enlivened by copious midges), were rewarded with a close, but all-too-brief view of an Otter swimming towards us, close to the bank, then diving and disappearing down stream. Third time lucky!

Tom Delaney

MULL OF GALLOWAY

10th June

Neville Crowther

A bright sunny morning dawned as we headed south and west to the Mull of Galloway. We parked where the lighthouse was all that separated us from the Isle of Man. There we found swathes of Spring Squill *Scilla verna*, Tormentil *Potentilla erecta* and Spotted Orchid *Dactylorhiza maculata* across the cliff-top hollows. The grassland was interrupted by old stone walls and

patches of coastal heathland, with whins *Ulex europaeus* and heathers *Calluna* and *Erica cinerea* in which Whitethroats, Linnets and Stonechats flitted from one songpost to another.

Towards the cliff edge where the soil is thin and rocky, the grasses are small and browned by the sun. Typical of maritime cliff communities these grasses included both Hair Grasses, Early and Silver, *Aira praecox* and *caryophylla*, Crested Hair Grass *Koeleria macrantha* and occasionally the rare Sea Fern Grass *Catapodium maritimum*. The 'blue' maritime subspecies of Red Fescue *Festuca rubra maritima* gave an attractive wash to the hollows containing deeper soil. The mosaic was enriched by varied and colourful flowering herbs from a large number of families. The entire colour spectrum was evident from the whites and creams of Wild Carrot *Daucus carota* and Burnet saxifrages *Pimpinella saxifraga* to a range of yellows from Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*, Rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*, Mouse-eared Hawkweed *Pilosella officinarum* and Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*.

Wall
Brown
butterfly



the pink and white of English Stonecrop *Sedum anglicum*, Rock Spurrey *Spergularia rupicola*, Sea Campion *Silene uniflora* and Thyme *Thymus praecox*, merging into Bloody Cranesbills *Geranium sanguinum* and the blues and purples of Squills, Purple Milk Vetch *Astragalus danicus* and Sheep's Bit *Jasione montana*: the shapely rosettes of Sea and Buck's horn plantains *Plantago maritima* and *coronopus* were set against rocks bearing pale-green *Ramalina* and orange *Xanthoria* lichens. I doubt whether a meadow on a Swiss alp could vie with this community for diversity. In addition to a continual movement of sea birds around the cliffs, there was a constant stream of Painted Ladies coming off the sea from the south. They were part of a congregation of millions that had been pouring northwards from Africa and Iberia over the last two months, well reported in the Press. A smaller number of fast moving Silver Y moths accompanied them. They joined resident Small Coppers and Walls nectaring on the blooms of the cliff top. We were also delighted to see dozens of Rose Chafers, glittering emerald green, buzzing around like giant bumble bees, feeding mainly on umbellifers: a rare species in Scotland.

Too soon it was time for lunch, which we took in the cliff-top sunshine, while deciding our afternoon plans

Neville Crowther.

MULL OF GALLOWAY BIRDS

10th June

Joanie McNaughton

The whole group met at the Mull of Galloway Lighthouse car-park at 10.15am, on a reasonable day with hazy sunshine and no wind. By lunch time, we were slapping on the sun block! On our way to join the Reserve Warden at the old Visitor Centre, Natalie Taylor, Maureen Richardson and I were met with quite a few Linnets flitting off and on the dry-stane dyke. We were also pleased to see Common Whitethroat and to hear its scratchy song. Stonechats were here too. Unfortunately, there had been a mix-up with RSPB's arrangements, and there was no warden to greet us and take us round. Nothing daunted, we walked towards the cliff-tops, pausing to look at the botanical interest, which is fully described in the accompanying report by our President. I was delighted to see Spring Squill *Scilla verna*, Northern Marsh Orchid *Dactylorhiza purpurella*, English Stonecrop *Sedum anglicum* and to have Adder's Tongue *Ophioglossum vulgatum* pointed out. Although I am writing mostly about the birds we saw, I can't avoid mentioning the huge invasion of Painted Ladies this year, and we were not let down here. They were everywhere. On our last visit in 2004 we saw only one, and the total seen on the reserve that year was only eight.

By this time, the group had, as always, split up, and small groups could be seen all over the Mull. Seabirds included Kittiwake, Gannet, Great Black-backed and Herring Gull in the air, while on the water and nesting on the cliffs were Guillemot, Tystie (Black Guillemot), Razorbill and a couple of Puffins. When we were here in 2004 we were told that the Puffin colony contained only nine birds.

On the insect front, I saw a lovely Small Copper: unfortunately it would not sit still long enough to allow a good photograph; not to mention the fact that it was sitting on a particularly inaccessible and precarious bit of the path

Leaving the cliffs, and with the aim of finding a nice spot for lunch uppermost in our minds, we went in search of the place where we had seen a Peregrine nest with two chicks on our 2004 visit. We found the spot, but no amount of scanning the cliff found the nest, or any sign of it. We ate our lunch here anyway, and our spirits soon lifted. Two Wheatears were spotted flitting about. The female even posed not far away, so close I barely needed to zoom in on it when taking a photo! From this vantage point we also had super views of Rock Pipit, House Martin, Swallow and Jackdaw. Then came the bad news: one of our party had learned at the Visitor Centre that the Peregrines' nest had been destroyed and the chicks believed to be stolen. The perpetrators had climbed down with the aid of ropes. But there was good news to follow. The adults, having lost their chicks, had set up home elsewhere along the

cliff. This new nest was being watched round the clock, and its location was being kept a closely guarded secret. I hope the pair are successful with their second breeding attempt.

After lunch, we decided to head for Wigtown Bay, via Luce Bay. By this time the sun was blazing down on us, and the insect world was fair buzzing with activity. We stopped often along the road, seeing lots of Silver Y moths, and something that looked and behaved like a Hummingbird Hawkmoth. Later study of our photographs suggested that it may have been a Prominent, perhaps either a Swallow or Lesser Swallow. I still feel the Hawkmoth is most likely, though possibly a bit washed-out and lacking the orange-brown on the underside of the hindwing: it was definitely behaving like a Hummingbird in its flight and choice of food plant - a tubular flower - Red Campion *Silene dioica*. By this time it was mid-afternoon; as we drove through the narrow lanes, we saw a Roe Deer in a field, its head protruding above long grass, a mass of a white umbellifer (need a botanist here to identify!) and Red Campion. We reached Luce Bay and joined another group of Nats. Here we saw a pair of Shelducks, Oystercatcher, Rock Pipit, Ringed Plover and Starlings along the shore. I was delighted to see Oyster plant *Mertensia maritima* thriving here, which I remember well from trips to Orkney, near Churchill's Barriers. And yet more Painted Ladies.

After ice creams, we headed off towards Wigtown Bay, leaving the botanists behind. It was a beautiful late afternoon with fabulous close views of a Goldfinch, singing its heart out on an Elder *Sambucus nigra*. We arrived at the hide overlooking the marsh and were presented with some super birding. There was a pair of Shelducks, a Dabchick (Little Grebe) with its chick, and a Moorhen with a young one piggybacking. We also saw Lapwings, Mallards with chicks, Pied Wagtail, two Whooper Swans, a pair of Teal, Redshank, two Herons, Oystercatchers, Lesser Black-backed and Herring Gulls. We were loathe to leave, but dinner beckoned, to be followed by an evening of Nightjar hunting.

A friend of Natalie's who lives locally took us through Raiders' Road to a place where we had been before in 2004. While we waited for the sun to set and the Nightjars to come out, the midges decided to show up in vast numbers. They didn't manage to put us (well, most of us!) off enjoying the song of Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff all around. We all agreed that Avon's Skin-so-Soft doesn't work and were at last relieved to hear at least three, possibly four, Nightjars chirring. Sadly we didn't see any flying, despite much waving of white handkerchiefs to attract the females. I suspect two members of the group will NOT be wanting to relive the experience; certainly where midges are concerned. If they do, they might wish to consider a gas mask!

Another superb day in the life of this particular Nat.
Thanks to all for organising.

Joanie McNaughton

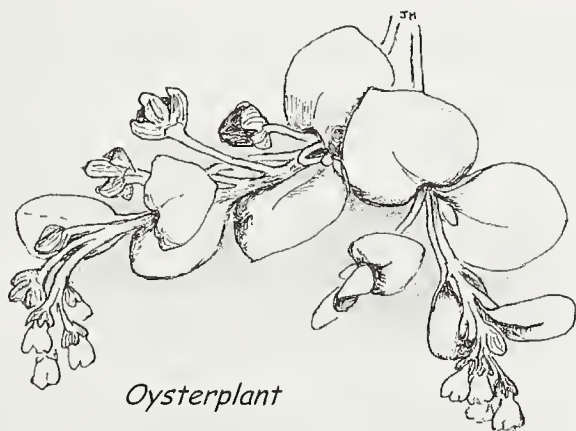
LUCE BAY

10th June

Roger Holme

After the visit to the Mull of Galloway, many of the Nats elected to visit the shingle beaches on the northeast coast of Luce Bay. The first stop was at the Cock Inn. After enjoying a cup of tea and ice cream, we found several flowering clumps of Oysterplant *Mertensia maritima* near the car-park. Also present on the beach was Sea Kale *Crambe maritima*, and Sand Couch *Elytrigia juncea* and the unusual Portland Spurge *Euphorbia portlandica*, in one of its six Scottish hectads. Nearby, an Oystercatcher was clearly defending a nest, and so we retreated to avoid disturbing it..... right into the territory of a Ringed Plover.

Around and within the car-park, Sea Fern Grass *Catapodium maritimum* was found. On the other side of the beach three more striking flowering Oysterplants were found together with the ubiquitous Sea Radish *Raphanus raphanistrum* ssp *maritimus*, Wild Carrot *Daucus carota* and also Smith's Pepperwort *Lepidium heterophyllum*. Our snake of cars then moved down the coast near to Corwall where a most interesting site was discovered. It contained coastal plants growing together with typically freshwater-loving plants. For example, we had Skullcap *Scutellaria galericulata* growing among Sand Sedge *Carex arenaria*. Parsley Water Dropwort *Oenanthe lachenalii* and Gipsywort



Lycopus europaeus also represented the freshwater plants, with Saltmarsh Flat Sedge *Blysmus rufus*, Saltmarsh Rush *Juncus gerardii*, False Fox Sedge *Carex otrubae*, Sea Club-rush *Bolboschoenus maritimus* representing the coastal species.

The keen eyes of our President found a Sea Slater *Ligia oceanica* among the pebbles.

Roger Holme

LOGAN GARDENS

10th June

Helen Slater

After lunch, following our visit to the cliff-top reserve at the Mull of Galloway, the group split up to pursue various explorations. Dorothy, Alaine, Tom and I went to spend the rest of the day at Logan Gardens, an outstation of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. There were beautiful stands of flowering plants, exotic trees and clever water features, but it was altogether too hot and sunny. Dorothy and I indulged ourselves with ice-creams on a seat overlooking the flower-beds. Alaine disappeared to take photographs and Tom wandered outwith the gardens looking for birds, which proved scarce. Other than a few species which repeated sightings of earlier in the day, a couple of Red-legged Partridges near the main gates were the only excitement.

Helen Slater

BARSALLOCH BEACH

11th June

Jackie Muscott

After visiting St. Ninian's Cave there was time to call at another shingle beach near Barsalloch, a bit further up the coast. The landward side of the beach where sand had settled was extremely colourful, with swathes of Wood Vetch *Vicia sylvatica* and a deep-purple Ivy-Leaved Toadflax *Cymbalaria muralis* (which, from a distance, I assumed was Thyme!). Closer to the shore there was a large amount of Sea Kale *Crambe maritima*, big plants, small plants and seedlings, plants in flower and plants in fruit, stretching as far as North Barsalloch, a good half kilometre. We had been told Yellow Horned Poppy *Glaucium flavum* was in the area and eventually found a few plants on the edge of the Kale.

En route there were other interesting plants: Scarlet Pimpernel *Anagallis arvensis*, Rough Clover *Trifolium scabrum*, Cornsalad *Valerianella locusta*, Carlina Thistle *Carlina vulgaris* and Burnet Rose *Rosa pimpinellifolia*. There were also a couple of Cinnabar Moths.

A most interesting stretch of beach.

Jackie Muscott

Footnote: Is Sea Kale on the increase on this stretch of coastline? Michael Braithwaite reckons it's spreading in Berwickshire.

ST NINIAN'S CAVE

11th June

Jackie Muscott

The trip to St Ninian's Cave on the third day of our holiday began with a pleasant woodland walk by a burn which empties into the sea at Port Castle Bay. Once we had left the garden escapes behind, we were among a number of woodland plants: Bluebells *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis*, Sanicle *Sanicula europaea* and Enchanter's Nightshade *Circaea lutetiana*.

Among the more interesting ferns were Hart's-tongue *Phyllitis scolopendrium* and Soft Shield Fern *Polystichum setiferum* which is rare in north-eastern Britain. Along the way we were also entertained by a family of Wrens.

Port Castle Bay has steep cliffs, grassy in places, and a shingle beach. It was sunny, but out on the shingle we were exposed to a chilly wind until we reached shelter close to the cave. Some of the cliffs are covered with Ivy *Hedera helix* which descends to the beach in places, and we were excited to find two spikes of Ivy Broomrape *Orobanchae hederae*. The plant is parasitic on Ivy, and this is the only place where it occurs as a native in Scotland. (There is a large colony at the Botanic Garden in Edinburgh, introduced accidentally with some Ivy plants.)

Other interesting plants along the beach included Sea Radish *Raphanus raphanistrum ssp maritimus*, which is something of a pest on the southwest coast of Scotland, Sea Beet *Beta vulgaris*, Sea Kale *Crambe maritima* a large and handsome cabbage, together with Carline Thistle *Carlina vulgaris* and Smith's Pepperwort *Lepidium heterophyllum*.

Cliffs near the cave sported Rock Samphire *Crithmum maritimum*. This plant, a yellow umbel, which grows mainly in the south, used to be eaten in salads or pickled, and gathering it from near vertical cliffs was a hazardous occupation. Shakespeare mentions it in 'King Lear' 'Half way down (the cliff) hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade.'

The cave itself was home to a colony of House Martins, with Fulmars nesting on the cliffs above. We ate our lunch in its shelter and here saw a couple of butterflies, a Painted Lady and a Wall Butterfly. Elsewhere we had seen Six-spot Burnet Moth caterpillars feeding on Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus* and getting ready to pupate by building themselves cocoons on grass stems.



Ivy Broomrape

Rock Spurrey *Spergularia rupicola* and Sea Fern Grass *Catapodium marimum* were growing round the cave, and a mass of Yellow Vetch *Vicia lutea* poured down the grassy cliffs nearby. The purple Bithynian Vetch *V. bithynica* was also present but required a bit of a climb. Both are rarities of southern Scotland, Bithynian Vetch being found only in Wigtonshire.

On the grassy cliffs beyond were more botanical treasures, Dyer's Greenweed *Genista tinctoria* and Parsley Water Dropwort *Oenanthe lachenalii*, along with Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria* and Wild Carrot *Daucus carota*. As the name suggests the *Genista* was once used for dying. It produces a strong yellow dye, which together with Woad was used to produce green. We saw a couple more butterflies here, another Painted Lady and a Common Blue, but soon we were exposed to the wind again and turned back.

Jackie Muscott

GOAT PARK AND RAIDERS ROAD

12th June

Neville Crowther

Leaving Newton Stewart to follow a meandering route back to Edinburgh, we first parked below Murray's Monument on the road to Clatteringshaws. It is here that the park housing the feral goats begins. Buzzards soared overhead, and the wooded gorge was full of the early morning bird song of Chaffinch, Siskin, Willow Warbler and Bullfinch.

This was the main congregation ground for the goats. A large group of kids and nannies pranced around in the sunshine under a large Sycamore only 50 yards from the road. Once our eyes became accustomed to



spotting them, it became clear that dozens in small parties were scattered across the hillside as far as we could see. The total count

approached 50. Also close to the road were four Ravens, sunning themselves on large boulders. We assumed it was a family party of the year. Wheatears and Meadow Pipits were also to be seen, flitting around the hillside above

As others arrived to watch the activity, we were told that we had missed a Red Squirrel a few hundred yards back to the west.

Continuing east we turned into Raider's Road below the dam at Clatteringshaws and waited beside the

Black Water of Dee where it winds through the birch scrub and granite boulders. Several Golden-ringed Dragonflies patrolled the line of the burn and Small Pearl-bordered Fritillaries nectared on the flowers in the heathland. A few Small Heath butterflies added variety, but the best discovery was a flowering large fresh-green specimen of Spignel *Meum athamanticum*, here at its absolute southern limit.

The arrangement was to have lunch at the Otter Pool where there were picnic tables, so on we drove. Within

a few minutes of arriving, Sue had discovered a family party of Common Sandpipers bobbing away on the bank-side boulders opposite. There were Four-spotted Chasers flying by the river, and Lyn and Helen saw a Chaffinch catch and devour one.

Soon after, about a dozen other Nats. arrived, and after lunch most of us decided to go on to the Ken-Dee Marshes.

Neville Crowther

ANGUS COAST

10th-12th July

SEATON CLIFFS SWT RESERVE

10th July

Neville Crowther

Lying immediately east of Arbroath, Seaton Cliffs Reserve is the first section of a series of coastal SSSIs stretching north from Whiting Ness to Ethie Haven and Riekle Craig to Scurdie Ness near Montrose. The Red Sandstone cliff scenery is spectacular, up to 100 feet above sea-level, with caves, islets and stacks. It is a well publicised RIGS site, as well as being popular with walkers, fishermen and naturalists. A good footpath runs along the cliff-top for two miles or so.

This was the venue for the first excursion of our Montrose weekend expedition, and by lunchtime on the Friday, 13 members had arrived at the car-park at the



Plume moth

end of the Arbroath Esplanade. Despite the strong wind, it was sunny and a variety of insects were constantly being found, observed and photographed in the cliff-top vegetation, which comprised scrub, coastal heath and herb-rich grassland. We were able to find one or two Graylings among the numerous, Common Blues, Meadow Browns and Ringlets. Despite searching every clump of Kidney Vetch *Anthyllis vulneraria*, of which there were many, we failed to find the Small Blue *Cupido minimus*, now sadly declining in its east-coast cliff habitat. Our diligence was rewarded by sightings of several day-flying moths, including plentiful adults and pupal cocoons of Six-Spot Burnet *Zygaena filipendulae*, small numbers of Yellowshell *Camptogramma bilineata bilineata*, Latticed Heath *Chiasmia clathrata clathrata*, Common

Footman *Eilema lurideola* and a plume moth *Platyptilia pallidactyla*, cryptically feeding on Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*. Among the more common bumble bees were, unexpectedly, many Mountain Bumble Bees *Bombus monticola*, which we were accustomed to seeing at much greater altitudes. Other insects included digger wasps from the family *Sphecidae* and many solitary bees *Megachile* sp. The latter had excavated many small holes in the bare earth banks. In eroded areas, Jackie was able to point out to us that the individual brood chambers had been lined with cut leaves.

The flowers of the cliffs were colourful and absorbing. We didn't have time to walk far enough to see all the rare flowering herbs listed in the citation but were able to record Scots Lovage *Ligusticum scoticum* on the steeper cliffs, with Pellitory of the Wall *Parietaria judaica*, Carlina Thistle *Carlina vulgaris*, Purple Milk Vetch *Astragalus danicus*, Meadow Oat-grass *Helictotrichon pratense* and Burnet Saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga* which were the more unusual calcicoles discovered in the herb-rich grassland. We were sad to miss Nottingham Catefly *Silene nutans*, here in one of its few Scottish sites. Mary had seen it at St Cyrus years ago and told us that it flowers in May.

Almost forgotten, House Martins zipped along the cliff edge all day, returning with insect prey to their natural cliff-face nest sites out of sight beneath our feet. Fulmars and Kittiwakes were also nesting here in modest numbers, and Stonechats and Linnets used the cliff-top scrub for breeding sites. We didn't see the Soay sheep flocks that graze the steep slopes, but one day we will..... when we don't need to leave to search out our B&Bs.

Neville Crowther

MONTROSE BASIN

11th July

Neville Crowther

Montrose Basin is a tidal lagoon, circular in shape and about a mile across: it lies behind the town and is connected to the sea by a short, navigable channel. This brought important trade and wealth to the town in previous times, as witnessed by the many ruins that remain of fine old stone-built warehouses, factories and merchants' houses. The river and its harbour still support a significant industry in support of North Sea oil production.

The Basin has an impressive array of protective designations (SPA/SSSI/LNR/Ramsar Site) and enjoys the additional protection of being an SWT Reserve. The SWT Visitor Centre and hide, where we started, provide outstanding views over the south shore and the extensive mud flats, which are rich feeding grounds for a wide range of birds at all times of the year. During our spell at the Centre and our walk from The Lurgies along the west shore of the Basin to the Bridge of Dunn, we recorded 40 species. Waterfowl were the most numerous, including: 30 Mute Swans, 50 Shelducks (and two Ruddy Shelducks, which were probably escapes). There were also Teal, Shoveler, Wigeon, some 250 Eiders, 30 Red-breasted Mergansers and 60 Goosanders. Nine species of wader included notabilities such as Greenshank, Black-tailed Godwit and Spotted Redshank and there were three raptors including an Osprey which gave us a grand fly-by. There was a busy colony of Sand Martins in an artificial cliff close in front of the centre.

Along the river towards Bridge of Dunn, Red Admiral, Meadow Brown and Ringlet butterflies were in profusion, and notable vascular plants included Giant Bellflower *Campanula latifolia*, Sand Spurrey *Spergularia rubra*, Smith's Pepperwort *Lepidium heterophyllum* and Sea Clubrush *Bolboschoenus maritimus*. We saw that there had been ineffectual attempts to eradicate Giant Hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*, which was prolific at some pointsand will no doubt continue so.

I had never been here before but ended up leading because I had a map!

Neville Crowther

ST CYRUS NNR

Lyn Blades

12th July

To be awakened by rain hammering on the skylight window of my bedroom was not an auspicious start to the day. That was at 5.15 am and by breakfast time there was no sign of an improvement. Dorothy and I were tempted to prolong the excellent breakfast (fresh fruit; cereal, bacon and eggs, home-made oatcakes, with a choice of three or four jams) provided by our

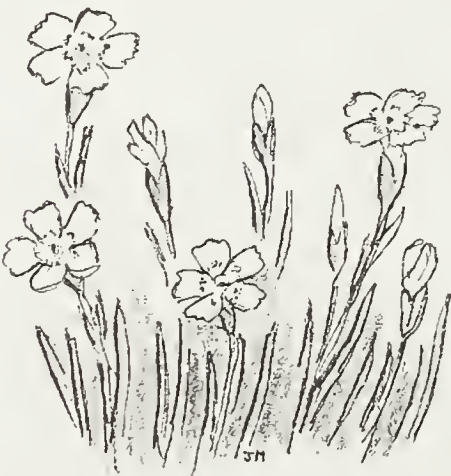
splendid B&B in Edzell and ignore our meeting time. But we set off and drove through the horrid, wet conditions to the visitor centre at St. Cyrus on the coast north of Montrose.

Martins and Swallows were nesting around the building, some using artificial nests under the eaves. We spent some time touring the displays inside and watching a close-up view of a family of Yellowhammers on the low wall outside the door. Then it was decision time! As we were there anyway, most of us set out.

As soon as we crossed the car park we began to find interesting plants, including Maiden Pink *Dianthus deltoides*, and Common Rock-rose *Helianthemum nummularium*. A little way along the path we reached a very wet area with a bridge crossing a small burn. There we saw Common Valerian *Valeriana officinalis*, Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, Reed Canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea*, Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and False Fox Sedge *Carex otrubae*.

Heading towards the shore, up through the Marram Grass *Ammophila arenaria*, on the sheltered side of the dunes, we came upon a wide variety of plants, many of them lime-loving and much more common on chalk and limestone soils in southern England. There was a fine show of Clustered Bellflower *Campanula glomerata*, plus Lesser Meadow Rue *Thalictrum minus*, Fairy Flax *Linum catharticum*, Carline Thistle *Carlina vulgaris*, Marjoram *Origanum vulgare* and many more. Cinnabar Moth caterpillars were enjoying the Ragwort *Senecio jacobaeae*.

After a brief glimpse of the sea between squalls, most of us retreated to the shelter of the low-lying ground. On our right were the dunes and to our left the high



Maiden Pink

cliffs which formed a backdrop to the reserve. We found more Maiden Pink (of which one patch was infected by Violet Anther Rust *Ustilago violacea*), Kidney Vetch

Anthyllis vulneraria and

Bloody Cranesbill *Geranium sanguineum*. But we had little time to explore, and it was back to the car-park for lunch and, for most of us, a drive home through torrential rain and an occasional spell of sunshine.

A small party of intrepid botanists (the usual suspects) elected to stay and explore further. They were

rewarded by an improvement in the weather and many interesting finds. Butterflies appeared – Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Common Blue and Painted Lady.

There were even propellor-like Plume Moths, similar to those seen at Arbroath. Following the shore initially, the group then moved inland to explore a variety of habitats not seen by the rest of us. Jackie has kindly given me a list of the more interesting plants. I list only a few of them here to illustrate what the rest of us missed.

Near the cliffs were Burnet Saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga*, Biting Stonecrop *Sedum acre*, Great Mullein *Verbascum thapsus* (over 20 plants), Sea Wormwood *Seriphidium maritimum* and Henbane *Hyoscyamus niger*. Plants such as Sand Couch *Elytrigia juncea*, Sea Milkwort *Glaux maritima* and Prickly Saltwort *Salsola kali* were found nearer to the sea.

This interesting area warrants a longer visit on a sunny day. It is a lovely place, and so we are hoping to arrange an excursion by coach sometime in July 2010.

Lyn Blades

OBSERVATIONS 2009



JANUARY		
1st	Green-winged Teal at Kinneil	BC
2nd	1 Stonechat (male) at Salisbury Crags	JB
5th	Black-necked Grebe at Ferny Ness	BC
9th	Male Bullfinch in the garden	MR
10th	33 Waxwings at Whitehill Gdns, Musselburgh	BC
12th	First purple crocuses in Murrayfield House gardens	MR
13th	Mixed finch flock at Cockmuir Midlothian of 380 Chaffinches and 63 Bramblings	NC
14th	First garden snowdrops: a skein of 150 Pink Footed Geese heading north	MR
	Black Redstart at North Berwick	BC
18th	1 Goosander (male), Water of Leith, Stockbridge.1 Dipper below upper weir in Dean Village	JB
23rd	Male Smew, Vane Farm	BC
24th	I must have been the last person in Lothian to see Waxwings - 34 at Tranent feeding on Wild Rose hips. Aconites in flower	NC
FEBRUARY		
1st	The month begins with a week of very cold weather with snow for two days on a NE wind :reputedly the worst snowfall since 1991: flights cancelled, buses stayed in depots, schools closed.	MR
3rd	Great White Egret, Aberlady	BC
12th	Nine <i>Iris stylosa</i> flowers on a south facing wall	MR
13th	1 Rock Pipit, Figgate Pond	JB
15th	1 Woodcock, Woodhall Dean	JB
23rd	First Daffodils, plus 40 <i>Iris stylosa</i>	MR
26th	Two queen bumble bees on crocuses	MR

MARCH

1st	2 Chiffchaffs singing - one at Brunstane; the other in wood above Eastfield 2 pairs of Long-tailed Tits observed nest building along Brunstane Burn - one in whin and the other in bramble The Fungus Group at Peebles watched Tree Creepers and Nuthatches on tree trunks and Goosanders on the river. Turkey tails <i>Coriolus versicolor</i> on stumps	JB MR
2nd	4 Snow Buntings, Musselburgh	BC
9th	1 Black-tailed Godwit, Musselburgh scrapes	JB
14th	Cowslips in flower on outing to Gosford Estate	MR
19th	Comma butterfly in garden: several Buff-tailed bumblebee queens searching for nesting holes	MR

APRIL

2nd	At Cramond, female Red-breasted Mergansers, one Grey Wagtail, a Comma and three Peacock butterflies	MR
10th	1 Willow Warbler, near Boating Pond at Musselburgh	JB
11th	2 Peacock butterflies at Scotland Street playground, River North Esk: rust presumably <i>Puccinia sesselis</i> on Few-flowered Leek <i>Allium paradoxum</i> as well as Ramsons <i>Allium ursinum</i> . It probably won't set the Leek back much, but one lives in hope.	JB JM
19th	2 Nuthatches, just south of West Linton Golf Clubhouse	JB
23rd	2 Avocets, Kinneil	BC
24th	Little Egret, Musselburgh	BC

MAY

3rd	At Hopes Reservoir, a Cuckoo calling and a Common Sandpiper bobbing : a Swift, several Swallows and many Willow Warblers: Primroses flowered on the reservoir banks.	MR
6th	After much debate, a Garden Warbler was identified singing between March Rd. and Queensferry Rd in Blackhall	MR
8th	A miserable wet and cold day for the Nats walk at Peebles, cheered only by the hot cups of tea offered by Eileen Perry. We did see hawking House Martins, heard the descending cadence of Willow Warblers, and admired some Mimulus and Marsh Marigolds	MR
10th	3 Whimbrels and Wheatears at Barns Ness More than 50 Swallows migrating westwards at Barns Ness	JB
13th	At Hopetoun: St Georges Mushroom; Swallows and House Martins nesting; Fairy Foxgloves	MR
14th	Ellen's Glen: 2 adult and 2 recently fledged Grey Wagtails; 1 Whitethroat and 1 Siskin - singing; 3 Comma Butterflies Hyvot's Bank: 5 Orange Tip butterflies - 4 on east side of valley and 1 near Gilmerton Dykes	JB
17th	3 Redstarts - singing birds in Aikyside Wood, between Grantshouse and Preston 1 Green Woodpecker, Retreat Wood, near Abbey St Bathans	JB
22nd	The large, fleshy and very mauve Cuckoo Flower, which puzzled me in the Bush Estate, turned out to be the south European neophyte <i>Cardamine raphanifolia</i>	NC
24th	4 Redstarts - singing birds up Glenkinnon Burn (above Peel) 3 Orange Tip butterflies - Glenkinnon Burn	JB
31st	Musselburgh: 2 Sedge Warbler, at the Scrapes; pair of Stonechats alarming west of Boating Pond	JB

JUNE

2nd	Blackford Glen: for the first time Small Ermine Moth tents on Bird Cherries <i>Prunus avium</i> .	JM
3rd	Pied Flycatcher, male, Bavelaw Castle	BC
5th	There was quite a stir in Frederick St. caused by a female Mallard accompanied by 4 small ducklings. How did she get there? I called at the RSPB shop in Rose St. to be told that the SSPCA had been informed and someone was coming to rescue the family.	MR
7th	Pair of Grey Wagtails with recently fledged young by Water of Leith between Quilts and Bonnington	JB
16th	Red-backed Shrike, female, Kinneil	BC

JULY

2nd	Very hot humid day with an exceptional temperature of 25 C. The heat-wave lasted 3 days, followed by a thunderstorm on the 5th. with large hailstones rattling down at about 9.30pm	MR
4th	Wichcleuch Burn near Yetholm: successful search for Maiden Pink <i>Dianthus deltoides</i> . Also Northern Brown Argus butterflies with Rock-rose <i>Helianthemum nummularium</i> , the larval food plant	JM
10th	Arbroath: a number of Plume Moths (they look like propellers when at rest). There were even more at St Cyrus on 12/7/09.	JM
13th	Insh House, Kincaig: Red Squirrels at the bird table, plus Siskins and more common birds.	JM
	Surveying for the Bird Atlas beyond Hirndean Castle in the Moorfoots, this day was a brief respite in a forgettable summer. The cleughs seemed full of fledged young - Ring Ousels, Wrens, Stonechats and Willow Warblers. Mountain Bumblebees foraged among the Blaeberry, and the hillside flushes had flowering sedges, aplenty - Yellow, Flea, Star, Pill, Black and Carnation	NC
14th	Loch Insh: Good views of the Ospreys.	JM
15th	R. Tromie: Plenty of Pignut <i>Conopodium majus</i> and Chimney Sweeper moths whose larvae feed on it.	JM
16th	R. Feshie: good views of the Ospreys at the artificial nest site Also, good numbers of Dark Green Fritillaries.	JM
22nd	Lesser Yellowlegs, Aberlady	BC

AUGUST

6th	Dere Street, north of Harestanes: large amounts of Betony <i>Stachys officinalis</i>	JM
9th	Back green, Marchmont: Blackbird still collecting food for nestlings (third brood?).	JM
11th	Near Linlithgow : another Blackbird feeding young .Purple Ramping Fumitory <i>Fumaria purpurea</i> in a weedy field. Buried among the weeds were a few rows of potatoes, some cabbages, some onions and a few tomatoes. Very strange	JM
15th	Pease Dean: a Speckled Wood butterfly, presumably moving up from the south, though it is also found in part of western Scotland and up the Great Glen to the Moray Firth	JM
	Initially atrocious weather for the Pease Dean walk. I slipped and sat down in the mud. A Speckled Wood butterfly was seen in a burst of sunshine and plump green fruits bedecked the Blackthorn bushes. Lots of sloe gin this winter ?	MR
17th	A miserable week of unsettled weather with rain and wind. But the south of Britain and the Continent had soaring temperatures, and forest fires burned	MR

	in France, Spain, Greece and Corsica.	
18th	3 Ruffs, Aberlady	BC
24th	During the last few days I have heard the soft "hoo-eet" of Willow Warblers moving south: hard to see, with the trees in full leaf, and they being secretive.	MR
28th	Common Crane, Tynninghame	BC
SEPTEMBER		
9th	Long-tailed Skua, Hound Point	BC
15th	Old opencast workings, Drumtassie Burn: a very late Large Red Damsel with the Darters.	JM
29th	Snow Goose (white morph), Aberlady	BC
OCTOBER		
10th	Skateraw: a relatively small rose bush decorated with over 70 Robin's Pincushion Galls (caused by a wasp <i>Diplolepis rosae</i>), some new, some from previous years.	JM
15th	On a sunny day in mid October Red Admiral butterflies feeding on fallen Yew berries on the grass in my garden.	JM
22nd	Firecrest, Skateraw	BC
NOVEMBER		
4th	Red-rumped Swallow, Aberlady	BC
9th	Baird's Sandpiper, Belhaven Bay	BC
15th	1 Wilson's Phalarope and 1 Mediterranean Gull at Musselburgh Scrapes 1 Common Seal in the river near the weir at Eskmouth.	JB
16th	Wilson's Phalarope, Musselburgh Scrapes	BC
21st	Arrived home (south Edinburgh) from a wet and windy drive on the M8 to the welcome sound of a Mistle Thrush singing full tilt. No wonder it's nicknamed the Stormcock	JMcN
DECEMBER		
13th	1 Stonechat (female) and 1 Woodcock, near Hillhouse, Carfraemill. A large old crab-apple tree with a marvellous crop, at a deserted homestead in same area	JB

OBSERVERS

JB	John H. Ballantyne	JM	Jackie Muscott
BC	Bill Cluny	J McN	Joanie McNaughton
NC	Neville Crowther	MR	Mary Robertson

SNIPPETS FROM JACKIE MUSCOTT

SWIFTS IN MARCHMONT

Swift numbers seem to have decreased in recent years, but they don't seem to have done too badly this year. I noted half a dozen flying over the flats on May 13 and enjoyed their screams throughout the summer. There were over 20 on August 3 (difficult to count as the different groups swoop overhead merge, divide and disappear behind the tall buildings). I last saw them on August 11.

GNAPHALIUM SYLVATICUM AT EASTER INCH.

At the behest of the Botanical Society I went to re-find the colony of Heath Cudweed *Gnaphalium sylvaticum* discovered by Roger in 2005. With the help of the GPS record I was able to find it and was pleased to see the colony had more than doubled in size. However I was less pleased to see Purple Moor Grass *Molinia caerulea* encroaching.

Heath Cudweed is a 'scarce' plant in Britain (not quite rare, but still at risk) and the Botanical Society is trying to monitor these plants.

PAINTED LADIES

2009 was a Painted Lady year. A few of these butterflies make their way from North Africa to Britain most years, but every so often there's a mass migration. Roger Holme and Jeff Waddell were lucky enough to see clouds of these butterflies crossing the Dorset coast in May, and a week later the Nats were seeing some of them at Loch Lomond. They were reported from all parts of Scotland.

The butterfly goes through several generations a year, the larvae usually feeding on Thistles. And last year's Painted Ladies certainly produced young, for as the year progressed they got tattier and tattier, and then in August a shiny new generation appeared.

Related butterflies like the Small Tortoiseshell and the Peacock hibernate during the British winter when it's cold and there's no food. But the Painted Lady has no need to hibernate in its North African home, and so, unless they head south again in the autumn, as a few may, they will not survive the winter, and we'll have to wait for another mass migration to see so many again.

ROBIN HUMMING

When I go out to do a bit of work on the back green, the Robin who owns the place comes to supervise. If I'm kneeling down weeding, he will settle himself on a stump just a couple of feet away, approaching closer if something edible gets turned up. Most of the time he sings softly to himself, his little chest heaving but his beak firmly closed. I like to think he's humming contentedly. A young couple have made a vegetable garden nearby, and the young man sometimes comes out to do a bit of work, but he has music in his ears and cannot hear the Robin. Would the younger generation even notice if the birds stopped singing?

WINTER LECTURE PROGRAMME

21st January

The Mysterious Starling And The Giant Porcupine

Dr. Paul Walton

Dr. Walton has had a key role in certain flagship RSPB projects..... Corncrakes, the Machair, Corn Bunting, Geese and Agriculture and Avian Influenza. Prior to that, he worked on the ecology of seabirds for seven years with the Applied Ornithology Unit at Glasgow. Several years were also spent abroad doing bird-conservation research in tropical latitudes, in many countries.

His talk was on yet another of his many specialities – non-native species. The intriguing title describes some of the more exotic examples.

25th February

Geese and Flora of Aberlady Bay LNR

John Harrison

Born and raised in Otley, West Yorkshire, John Harrison studied geography at Aberdeen University, graduating in 2000. He did voluntary work for conservation organisations before taking up his first job at the RSPB Loch of Strathbeg reserve in 2001. He went off to work and travel in New Zealand and on returning worked for two years at the Dee Estuary in North Wales) including managing the Little Tern colony project there. After a spell at Otmoor, Oxfordshire, doing habitat restoration (returning wheat and carrot fields to wet grassland and reedbed) he started at Aberlady in 2007.

He follows a distinguished group of wardens, including Russell Nisbet, Pete Gordon and Ian Thomson.

His lecture comprised two halves: birds, especially geese, and plants, including such special favourites as Grass of Parnassus and Frog Orchid

25th March

Moths and Moth-ers

Dr Malcom Lindsay

Dr. Lindsay is a retired GP from the Borders. He last spoke to us in 1997, about butterflies. On this occasion, he showed us beautiful photographs illustrating life histories, habitats, trapping methods and migration. He described the amusing and fascinating names of moths and how many originated. One can well imagine why certain species are called Uncertain, Suspected, Confused and Delicate.

Members Night April 2009

The following short talks were given:

Alastair and Joanie McNaughton – 'Seychelles' – a natural-history honeymoon, with Fairy Terns and snorkelling on coral reefs.

Neville Crowther – 'Friends from the North' – the story of how winter bird migrants to Scotland are tracked.

Natalie Taylor – 'Daubenton's Bats on the Union Canal' – describing her local research project.

Jackie Muscott – 'Janet Raeburn's Orchids' – a privileged view of part of the archive of photographs left to us by a former stalwart of the Society.

Patrick Chaney – 'Plants of Craiglockhart Hill' – a personal research project, history, plants and plant survivals.

Presentations were also laid on by:

Jean Long, photographs; Elizabeth Faquharson, mammalian skulls; Phil McInnes, nest-boxes.

23rd September

Sea Eagles in Scotland

Claire Smith

21st October

Echo location

Natalie Taylor

18th November

Taking Stock

Laurie Campbell

A *tour de force* demonstration by a master-craftsman, delivered with self-deprecating modesty: a photographic biography from a man dedicated to recording Scotland's wildlife and scenery.

THE SOCIETY'S EQUIPMENT

In addition to books held in the Library, the Society has the following items which can be borrowed by members for their private use.

Members are responsible for the care of equipment on loan

Telescope Bushnell Spacemaster 20-40x, in carrying case and with window-mount for in-car use. Apply to Grace Jamieson: 0131 453 3434

Microscopes, high- and low- power. Apply to Mary Clarkson: 0131 667 3815 and to Elizabeth Farquharson: 0131 447 19943815

Small-mammal traps(24 available) Apply to Elizabeth Farquharson: 0131 447 1994

Slide Projector: Apply to Elizabeth Farquharson: 0131 447 1994

Slide collection left to the Society by Janet Raeburn. The subjects are mostly botanical but also include birds, mammals, butterflies and Scottish scenery..

THE SOCIETY'S LIBRARY

Any member wishing to borrow a particular volume should ring me seven days before the meeting. At other times, or if a book is required urgently, please make contact and we may be able to work something out. Members wishing a copy of the Library catalogue can ring me for one: price £1.50 + postage. (or free by e-mail). We are investigating whether it can be posted on the Society's website

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BAWSINCH

The Bawsinch Nature Reserve at Duddingston is managed by the SWT, who allow the Society to hold a key for members. Apply to Joanie McNaughton: 0131 477 0270

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The articles, excursion reports and observations contained in this issue have come in from a wide variety of members: we are grateful for all these contributions... without them there could be no *Journal*.

We are indebted once again to Jackie Muscott for the many deft drawings she has produced for this issue. Where appropriate, we have also re-used some of hers from previous years.

The drawings used on the first page, at the head of the Excursions section, and others interspersed throughout are, of course, immediately recognisable as being by the late Eric Perry. They have been used in this way for some years now, and we hope to continue so to do: they deftly convey the ethos and spirit of the Society, and we thank Eileen Perry for her kind permission to continue to use them.

This year, the photographs used in the centre-spread are by Joanie McNaughton, Sue Crowther, Roger Holme and our President: they provide a graphic record of some of the year's highlights.

Subject	By
Loch Lomond	Joanie McNaughton
Goldfinch	Joanie McNaughton
Porcelain Fungus	Sue Crowther
White Water Lily	Joanie McNaughton
Giant Cep	Sue Crowther
Loch Trool	Sue Crowther
Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary	Joanie McNaughton
Wood of Cree	Joanie McNaughton
Large heath	Roger Holme
Quail	Abbie Marland
All others	Neville Crowther

As in previous years, the layout of these pages is by Ena Gillespie.

We should like to thank all the Society Office-bearers and members of the Journal Committee who have provided much needed help with the transfer of the Editorship. Particular thanks are paid to Sandra Stewart, Lyn Blades, Jackie Muscott, Ena Gillespie, and of course Neville Crowther....certainly for their generous help this year and for their contribution over previous years, setting a standard which it will be a challenge to match.

Considerable thanks are due also to Sam Burdon for her help in tackling the problems incurred in changing IT platform, from Mac to PC.

Contributions can be e-mailed to journal@edinburghnaturalhistorysociety.org.uk. If you do not have e-mail, you can send e-mails from any Library: there is usually a Librarian on hand to help.

